

**The Highland Council**  
**No. 4 2023/2024**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 29 June 2023 at 10.35 am.

**1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence**  
**A' Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

**Present:**

Mr C Aitken	Ms E Know
Ms S Atkin	Mr B Lobban
Mr M Baird	Mr P Logue
Mr A Baldrey (Remote)	Mr D Louden
Mr C Ballance	Mr A MacDonald
Dr C Birt	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr B Boyd	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Bremner	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mr S Mackie (Remote)
Mr J Bruce	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr M Cameron	Mr R MacKintosh
Mrs I Campbell	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms K MacLean
Mr A Christie	Mr T MacLennan(Remote)
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr D Macpherson
Ms T Collier (Remote)	Ms M MacCallum (Remote)
Mrs H Crawford	Ms J McEwan
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson	Mr D Millar
Mr D Fraser	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro
Mr R Gale	Mrs P Munro
Mr K Gowans	Ms L Niven
Mr J Grafton	Ms M Nolan(Remote)
Mr A Graham(Remote)	Mr P Oldham
Mr R Gunn	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs J Hendry	Mrs M Reid
Ms M Hutchison	Mr M Reiss
Mr A Jarvie	Mr K Rosie
Mrs B Jarvie (Remote)	Mrs L Saggars
Ms L Johnston	Mr A Sinclair (Remote)
Mr R Jones	Ms M Smith(Remote)
Mr S Kennedy	Mr R Stewart
Ms L Kraft	Ms K Willis

**In Attendance:**

Interim Chief Executive  
Interim Depute Chief Executive  
Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance  
Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place  
Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning  
Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care  
Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property

## **Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

### **Preliminaries**

Prior to the commencement of formal business the Convener confirmed the appointment of Derek Brown, currently Deputy Chief Executive of North Lanarkshire Council, as Chief Executive of Highland Council. He also took the opportunity to pay tribute to the Interim Chief Executive, Ms Kate Lackie, who had stepped up at very short notice and at a very important time for the Council given the budget pressures that were faced. On behalf of Members, he expressed appreciation for the professional and dedicated manner in which she had led staff and Members during this period.

#### **1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Green, Mrs Bet McAllister, and Ms S Rawlings.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Council **NOTED** the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 6i – Mrs J Hendry

Item 9 – Mrs J Hendry

Item 10 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg and Mrs J Hendry

Item 14 - Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 16 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 23 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

#### **3. Confirmation of Minutes Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais**

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 11 May 2023 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately.

The Council **APPROVED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held 11 May 2023.

#### **4. Minutes of Meetings of Committees Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan Chomataidhean**

There had been submitted for confirmation as correct records, for information as regards delegated business and for approval as appropriate, the Minutes of Meetings of Committees contained in Volume circulated separately as undernoted:-

Nairnshire Committee  
Sutherland County Committee

**Date**  
15 May 2023  
16 May 2023

Lochaber Area Committee	16 May 2023
Climate Change Committee	17 May 2023
Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee	18 May 2023
Easter Ross Area Committee	22 May 2023
Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee	22 May 2023
Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee	22 May 2023
Communities and Place Committee	24 May 2023
Badenoch and Strathspey Committee	29 May 2023
Caithness Committee	29 May 2023
Gaelic Committee	31 May 2023
Comataidh na Gàidhlig	31 May 2023
Education Committee	1 June 2023
City of Inverness Area Committee	5 June 2023
Corporate Resources Committee	8 June 2023
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	12 June 2023
Audit and Scrutiny Committee	15 June 2023
Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Special Meeting)	26 June 2023

The Minutes, having been moved and seconded were **APPROVED** matters arising having been dealt with as follows:-

### **Nairnshire Committee – 15 May 2023**

#### **Nairn Business Improvement District Proposal Moladh Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Narann**

To support the Nairn BID Ltd Proposal in the BID ballot.

### **Caithness Committee – 29 May 2023**

#### **Notice of Amendment – Thurso High School Update Brath Atharrachaidh – Cunntas às Ùr mu Àrd-Sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa**

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Caithness Committee held on 29 May, the following Notice of Amendment had been received in accordance with Standing Order 13 –

“On Monday 29th May, at the Caithness Area Committee, Members were asked to agree Option 1 of supplementary agenda item 4 as the recommended and preferred option for Thurso High School in that, following the discovery of significant structural defects to Block A, it should be demolished and for the site and adjoining blocks to be made good at a cost of £1.2m.

A motion was brought to the Committee to agree to option 4 for the demolition and replacement of the block at a cost of £7.5m.

This notice of amendment requests Council to consider the immediate implementation of Option 1; also to refer further considerations for the site of block A and the rest of the Thurso High School campus to the agreed review of the Council’s capital programme”.

Signed: Mr R Bremner   Mr G MacKenzie   Mr D Loudon   Mr K Rosie   Mr J Finlayson   Mr D Millar   Mr W MacKay   Mrs M Paterson

In this connection, there had been re-circulated Report No. CC/13/23 dated 26 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

Speaking to the Amendment, Mr R Bremner referred to the limited capital funding available to the Council and the need to be very careful how it spent this funding. It was set out in the Council's Scheme of Delegation that Local Committees could not determine the capital spend of the Council and it was therefore queried why options were submitted to the Caithness Committee with costings and options instead of an update progress report. Reference was made to the Housing and Property Committee's consideration of this matter and actions in respect of Thurso High School Block A and in particular new modular classrooms to replace Block A and that longer term options were also being assessed and would be reported to a future Housing and Property Committee meeting. Discussions on the inclusion of any school in the Council's capital programme was still to be debated by Council and there was a need to consider the best outcome for all schools.

In response, Mr R Gunn referred to the Block A of Thurso Highland School which had been condemned due to serious structural defects. School Staff and parents had not been asked for input to the options for the School. There had been a full debate at the Local Committee on the options and a Motion brought forward to adopt option 4 in the report to that Committee, which following a vote, was approved and was a democratic decision of the Committee. At no time were Members told that they could not discuss the options or that any of the options were not feasible or could not be done. It was accepted that options 1 or 2 would not happen quickly but that demolition could take place later next year allowing plenty of time for discussion. The Caithness Committee decision set out clearly what the majority of Members of that Committee would like to happen with Block A.

During discussion the following main points were made:-

- reference was made to the challenges faced by the Council with its capital programme and the impossible situation of Local Committees agreeing to significant capital expenditure and the impact this would have on all other areas of Highland. More concerning would be the views of other communities across Highland in light of work already done to prioritise school builds in the capital programme which was long established. No one disputed that the position with the Thurso High School building had to be reviewed very soon but this should not undermine the well recognised issues with other schools in Highland which would all be put at risk if a Local Committee could allocate significant capital funding to a local project, taking no account of the strategic direction of the Council in its capital planning;
- this was not an issue of Inverness against Caithness but more an issue of the Administration against Localism. It was felt that a Local Committee would be failing in its duty if it did not put forward projects in their area. However, the decision on whether the project went ahead was for Strategic Committees and Full Council whilst acknowledging that it was appropriate that the Local Committee could feed into this process;
- this was a unique situation where a school building, due to serious structural defects, had been closed and immediately evacuated. The Caithness Committee had expressed their desire of what they wanted to see happen to address the defects in Block A and it would be detrimental to see this overturned by Full Council;
- the decision of the Caithness Committee was competent but also it was competent for other Members to submit a Notice of Amendment to challenge that

- decision;
- the development of a masterplan for a new campus in Thurso was at an early stage and would take a long period of time to be realised and the right course of action would be to agree Option 4 and rebuild Block A; and
  - the Government needed to fund the Highlands correctly and the Council had to be honest about its precarious financial situation. The Highlands needed significant investment which was evident with the poor state of some of its schools.

Thereafter, Mr R Bremner, seconded by Mr J Finlayson, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Amendment.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr R Gunn, seconded by Mr M Reiss **MOVED** the Minute of the Caithness Committee as it stood in relation to its decision regarding the Thurso High School Update.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 38 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 28 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Ms S Atkin, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Reid, Mr A Rhind, Mr K Rosie.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr H Crawford, Mr A Christie, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Ms M Nolan, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms M Smith, Mr R Stewart.

**Abstention:**

Mr A Baldrey, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K Willis.

**Decision:**

The Council **AGREED** the immediate implementation of Option 1; also to refer further considerations for the site of block A and the rest of the Thurso High School campus to the agreed review of the Council's capital programme.

**Gaelic Committee - 31 May 2023**  
**Comataidh na Gàidhlig - 31 Cèitean 2023**

**Starred Item 4 – Draft Gaelic Language Plan 4**

The Council **AGREED** to homologate the submission of the draft Plan to Bord na Gàidhlig.

Minutes of Meetings not included in the Volume were as follows:-

- i. Investment Sub Committee held on 16 March 2023 (approved by the Sub Committee on 22 June 2023) **NOTED**;
- ii. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held on 21 March 2023 (approved by the Board on 22 June 2023) **NOTED**;-
- iii. Chief Executive Recruitment Panel held on 20 April, 1 June ,15 June and 21 June 2023 **APPROVED**;- and
- iv. Redesign Board held on 31 May 2023 **APPROVED**.

## **5. Question Time Àm Ceiste**

The following Questions had been received by the Head of Legal and Governance.

### **Public Questions Ceistean Poblach**

**(1)** Ms J Bisset

To the Leader of the Council

Following the lack of any acknowledgement from The Highland Council to recent correspondence raising serious concerns around numerous significant and longstanding defects in Fortrose Academy buildings, I would like to ask if I should interpret this silence as recognition that The Highland Council places little value on the safety and wellbeing of the Fortrose School population and is incapable of delivering an appropriate action plan to address valid concerns?

The response had been circulated.

**(2)** Ms R Wright

To the Chair of Education

I am proud of being a Fortrose Academy pupil but it doesn't seem fair that most other Secondary Schools have much better facilities. How will the Highland Council rectify this?

The response had been circulated.

### **Member Questions Ceistean Bhall**

**(1)** **Mr A Christie**

To the Leader of the Council

Please could the Leader inform me of all vacant positions within the Council establishment by service directorate preferably in a tabular format including the date the position became vacant.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the extent of vacancies

and the period of time for which posts had been vacant was known.

In response, it was confirmed that this question had already been answered.

**(2) Mr A Christie**

To the Leader of the Council

With the exception of staff based at schools and depots, please could the Leader detail by department within each of the service directorates (e.g. Housing, Development, Planning Environment & Building Standards, Housing Supervision and Management, Homelessness, Adult Services, Looked After Children, Family Teams etc ) the percentage calculation for staff which will show the proportion of time worked from home contrasted to the time worked from an office?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried what the chance was of implementing the office rationalisation policy and new ways of working when it was not known where staff were splitting their time in terms of working locations.

In response, it was clarified that this was an operational matter that was being looked at by each service

**(3) Mr A Graham**

To the Leader of the Council

Facilities Management Service for schools: please provide number of staff employed by the Council (Full Time Equivalent) and number (FTE) provided by staff agencies and contractors, at 31 March 2023 or a more recent date if available.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, corresponding figures for the number of school FM staff vacancies at the same date, allocated by Associated School Groups if possible, were requested.

In response, it was stated that the information would be provided.

**(4) Mr M Baird**

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

What is the timetable for rolling out the Scottish Governments 20 MPH speed limits in Highland towns and villages?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(5) Mrs T Robertson**

To the Leader of the Council

The 2023 School role forecast published in February shows significant pressure on capacity in Croy Primary School. The pressure continues to increase throughout the period quoted. The Croy school site has limited space for expansion. When can we expect work to begin on the design of the new school which will should give an indication of a completion date?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried when work would begin on the building of the new Primary School at Tornagrain.

In response, it was clarified that this would form part of the capital plan debate after the Recess.

**(6) Mr D Gregg**

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

Residents in the Crown area have been asking to hold a play street later this year to make it easier for their children to play outside on the road. They have been told they need to pay hundreds of pounds for professional traffic management scheme, which is both unaffordable for my residents and massively out of proportion with what other councils around the UK charge for these schemes.

Will the council introduce a process to allow residents to apply for play streets without such onerous requirements, as has successfully been done in Edinburgh and Glasgow?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if residents would be allowed to request cycle storage on their streets by utilising the £2M fund from Cycling Scotland specifically released for that purpose.

In response, it was confirmed that this would be looked into and assessed.

**(7) Mr C Ballance**

To the Leader of the Council

In the wake of the devastating recent wildfires, and the continuing dangers, will the Council take immediate and urgent steps to work with the tourism industry, police and fire services to instigate a campaign of public education about the dangers of lighting fires, using all communication resources available, such as social media, posters, and signs throughout the Highlands, particularly at tourist accommodation and attractions?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether there would be more signs, posters and social media posts across visitor sites this summer.

In response, it was clarified that the service determined the amount of signage and all the other information that was required to be able to deter what was referred to in the

original question.

**(8) Mr R MacKintosh**

To the Leader of the Council

Back in September 2022 Council passed a motion agreeing to set up a stakeholder group to review the creative and cultural importance of music and creative arts in all of the Highlands. Can you tell me how many meetings this group has had and when we should expect the result of its findings?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(9) Mr A Baldrey**

To the Chair of Communities and Place

It is generally agreed that Community Food Growing is a positive activity, not only for the food value itself; the support for people on low incomes; the contribution to community wealth building; and the reduction in “food miles”, but also from the mental health aspect of a communal and outdoor activity that it brings, and provide food for families on low incomes.

Will your Administration continue to fund the Community Food Officer post after this year and bring a report to Council on their work and successes, and the steps the Council is taking to embed this work across the Council.

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(10) Ms K Willis**

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

Is the Council planning to make significant bids to the £58m ScotZEB Phase 2, and the expected extra £45m in the Community Bus Fund in order to work towards building a Council owned pan-Highland wide fleet of different-sized electric buses so as to provide a public service on as many of the routes currently tendered out as is practical.

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(11) Mrs H Crawford**

To the Chair of Property and Housing

Parents, carers, teachers and children grapple daily with the reality that the Beauly Primary School building is crumbling, a situation that is replicated across many schools in Highland.

If the application for LEIP funding fails, what is Plan B?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried how many children in Highland attended schools which required either substantial repair or were not fit for purpose.

In response, it was agreed that this information would be provided to all Members.

**(12) Mrs L Sagers**

To the Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee

What legal advice has THC sought with respect to its Short Term Let licensing policy and procedures to ensure that the said policy and procedures are robust and lawful, in light of the recent judgement of the Court of Session regarding the City of Edinburgh's policy on short term lets?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(13) Mr P Logue**

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

To ask the Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee to outline the number of charging sessions conducted on Highland Council's public EV charger network and the energy consumed in kWh (broken down by destination and journey chargers) from the period 1 March 2023 to current, compared to the same period in 2022?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if the Chair, in consultation with the EV Infrastructure Board, would be looking at more innovative tariff structures adopted by other Councils, such as off-peak charging rate discounts for residents.

In response, the Chair confirmed that this was something that would be looked at in due course.

**(14) Mr A Jarvie**

To the Chair of Corporate Resources

In each of the last 5 years, how many of the quarterly year end out-turn projections have been within £1m of the realised outcome?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(15) Mr R Stewart**

To the Chair of the Housing and Property

Given potential cost increases to the Broadford and Nairn Primary Schools, which received LEIP funding in December 2020 can the Member confirm that the Highland Council is still committed and on track to deliver these vital projects by the December 2025 deadline in order to drawdown the revenue funding committed by the Scottish Government in the second phase of the Learning Estate Investment Programme?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the Chair of Housing and Property was asked if she acknowledged that every day that progress on new schools had not started this needlessly increased the cost of these projects and might jeopardise the delivery date of December 2025.

In response, it was agreed that an answer would be provided to all Members.

## 6. **Notices of Motion** **Brathan Gluasaid**

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Head of Legal and Governance –

(i) (Carried over from Council on 11 May 2023)

**Transparency Statement: Mrs J Hendry made Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a close family member was an employee of High Life Highland. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.**

It is well known that voluntary, charitable and youth organisations are struggling with the reduction in funding that they are all experiencing, and this is made significantly more difficult with the level of letting fees for council premises that are being levied on such organisations.

Many of these organisations make a significant contribution to the mental welfare of our young people and this is particularly important in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

In addition, other such organisations provide vital childcare and after school clubs and activities for the children of working parents.

The level of letting fees is threatening the very existence of such organisations and if they have to close and withdraw their services the knock-on effect for children's mental health and the ability for working parents to continue to work is considerable, with the added impact on the local economies that will ensue.

That being the case this Council will review the letting charges for all such organisations and introduce a reduction in letting fees of 50% for all charitable and voluntary organisations.

By doing this we will ensure that the invaluable services that they provide across Highland will continue to the benefit of all communities.

Signed: Mr R Gale    Mr J McGillivray    Mr A Graham    Ms J McEwan

In this connection, there had been re-circulated Report No. RES/14/23 dated 30 May 2023 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a range of examples were cited in relation to local organisations providing vital not for profit services and activities in communities who were struggling to pay the current level of letting fees. High Life Highland was also undertaking a review of its activities;
- many organisations were having to charge more for their services and activities, effectively excluding many children from low income families, particularly in the current cost of living crisis;
- concern was expressed at the pressure that might be placed on mental health and other services for young and older people if some community organisations had to fold and the associated financial impact on the Council;
- many of the charitable and voluntary organisations paying the letting fees were largely funded by the Council and this did not demonstrate a caring approach;
- the impact reductions in grants and increase in letting charges had on fragile rural economies was highlighted and the fact this was not a valid way to approach community wealth building strategies;
- while empathising with the sentiments of the motion, a direct negative was proposed due to the financial implications for the budget and on the basis there had been no alternative saving proposal identified;
- applying a full cost recovery approach to letting fees furthered inequalities and excluded organisations who tackled specific social issues within marginalised communities. The financial implications of the motion did not outweigh the social benefits provided to communities;
- the motion supported the Council's duties in relation to poverty, community learning and development and wellbeing. There was a need to consider in the round issues of communities not being able to access community school facilities due to cost;
- the potential for rent relief to be provided to charitable and voluntary organisations to counteract the letting fees need to be explored and brought forward to the relevant strategic committee;
- the Council's reserves had increased significantly over the previous year to a much higher level than expected, and should be used to meet the costs of the motion until at least the end of the financial year;
- the Chief Financial Officer earlier in the meeting had been clear about the serious financial challenges facing the Council. While empathising with the motion, concern was expressed at the proposal to incur additional expenditure given the recent challenges in being able to agree a balanced budget at which there had been an opportunity to consider this issue by way of an amendment. There was a commitment to review the budget and this issue needed to be considered properly in the round and in a more sustainable way going forward rather than through a notice of motion;
- the Council's Chief Financial Officer had clearly advised Members that the reserves were finite. The cost implications of the motion would accelerate the projected diminishing of those reserves and should not be considered as an option; and
- the projected level of income from letting fees was speculative and the financial assessment had not taken into account the impact on the sustainability of voluntary and charitable organisations or them ceasing to use Council facilities.

Thereafter, Mr R Gale, seconded by Mr R Gunn, **MOVED** the motion.

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, seconded by Mr D Fraser moved an **AMENDMENT** that the Council do not agree the motion.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 27 and the **AMENDMENT** received 35 votes, with 1 abstention, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the Motion:**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr C Ballance, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mrs H Crawford, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr R Gunn, Mr R Gale, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Ms M Nolan, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

**For the Amendment:**

Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie.

**Abstention:**

Ms S Atkin

**Decision**

The Council **REFUSED** the motion.

**(ii)** (Carried over from Council on 11 May 2023)

The positive impact of the NC500 around the Highlands has been manyfold, however, with the positive impact on the economy of the Highlands comes the negative impact on services and amenities across the area.

Last year the Council waste collection services innovatively introduced a flexible and additional bin collection scheme which made a significant difference to the levels of waste that was abandoned in some of the most scenic parts of the Highlands.

Local communities have commented on what a positive difference this initiative made around the NC500 route.

That being the case this Council will put a similar project in place for the coming season to ensure that we make the NC500 route memorable for all the right reasons for the traveling visitors. In addition, this will also be welcomed by the local communities along the route who do not want to be faced with uncontrolled waste abandoned indiscriminately by the roadside.

Signed: Mr R Gale   Mr M Baird   Mrs McEwan   Mrs A MacLean

In this connection, there had been re-circulated Report No. RES/15/23 dated 30 May

2023 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the additional monies allocated to the scheme through non-recurring earmarked reserves as Covid restrictions were relaxed was no longer available. A direct negative to the motion was proposed on the basis of the financial assessment provided by the Chief Financial Officer and the fact the required level of funding for the scheme was not available within the Service;
- the Waste Management Team operated in a highly regulated environment and would continue to respond accordingly to environmental issues, albeit standards might not be as high for short periods in some areas as achieved with the additional funding over the past two years;
- at this stage of the tourist season it was unlikely the Service would be able to recruit seasonal workers and therefore its focus had been on carrying out additional work in known busy tourist areas, including outwith core working hours;
- the Council needed to be more proactive in terms of waste collection on the route and therefore the scheme needed to be continued this year and in addition more signage be put in place regarding the responsible disposal of waste;
- similar pressures outlined in the motion were experienced by communities on the routes that brought custom to the NC500 and in other areas of Highland. If there was to be any additional expenditure, the scheme should be extended to those other parts of Highland;
- the Chief Financial Officer earlier in the meeting had been clear about the serious financial challenges facing the Council. While sympathising with the sentiment of the motion, difficult decisions had to be made. Funding for the scheme was no longer available and there was no proposal for where the additional funds should be allocated other than from the Council's reserves;
- the financial assessment in relation to the motion provided a well-rounded costed proposal to benefit from a transient visitor levy. Members were encouraged to support the implementation of a levy at the appropriate time given it could help fund schemes of this nature;
- highlighting that one way or the other it was the responsibility of the Council at some stage to collect the waste along the NC500 and other routes, consideration had to be given to the multiplier effect and the cost to the Highlands as a tourist destination associated with littering;
- the potential for the Council to undertake a campaign to educate drivers and promote a code of conduct to encourage people to take their litter home was suggested;
- it was queried whether there had been discussions with NC500 Limited who managed and profited from the route about them contributing to the cost of maintaining the road and waste collection;
- there was a need to be evidence based on this issue and that the regular visitor management updates showed that the nature and level of tourism in Highland was returning to that prior to the pandemic;
- while supportive of the principle of continuing of the scheme and its extension to other areas in Highland, the additional funding required would become a recurring and expanded request and the Council had to be able to manage its budget in an appropriate fashion; and
- the Administration's direct negative response to the motion demonstrated a lack of imagination with no positive suggestions of how Members could work together or amendments to the motion put forward to find a solution to this issue.

Thereafter, Mr R Gale, seconded by Ms J McEwan, **MOVED** the motion.

Mr G MacKenzie, seconded by Mr R Bremner, moved an **AMENDMENT** that the Council do not agree the motion.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 24 and the **AMENDMENT** received 37 votes, with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the Motion:**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr C Balance, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mrs H Crawford, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr R Gunn, Mr R Gale, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Ms M Nolan, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

**For the Amendment:**

Ms S Atkin, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie.

**Decision**

The Council **REFUSED** the motion.

- (iii) The current policy on access with trailers to recycling centres is causing confusion, inconvenience and additional un-necessary cost to householders. For example, old bricks, broken slabs and rockery stones (aka rubble) are acceptable in a car but not by trailer or van.

We therefore ask that the Council conducts a review of the Entry Guidance, Recycling Centres (HWRC) Conditions of Entry for trailers and vans, with a view to making the centres more accessible to householders disposing of non-commercial waste on their own behalf, and thereafter trial the revised guidance for a three-month period.

Signed: Mr A Graham Mr A Christie Mr M Baird Mr J Grafton Mr R Gunn  
Mrs T Robertson Mr R Gale

During discussion, it was commented that there were no cost implications associated with the proposed review of entry guidance and it would clarify what was currently a confusing situation. In addition, it was highlighted that the Council's Bulky Uplift Service had been expanded to include removal of DIY waste.

The Chair of the Communities and Place Committee drew attention to the financial assessment of the motion which indicated that budgetary savings in the last three years had been linked to restrictions on acceptance of waste at Council Recycling Centres. He went on to state that the Council's Recycling Centres were provided and, more importantly, licensed for household waste only. Prior to the introduction of controls, they had been handling 22% more waste than the Scottish average, which

equated to an additional 24,000 tonnes of waste per year. Since controls had been introduced, the amount of waste the Council handled had become aligned with the Scottish average and related treatment costs had reduced by over £400,000, delivering the budget saving Members had approved.

The Council's current policy was that vans under 3.5 tonnes and/or trailers were allowed into all Recycling Centres with permitted household items including garden waste. DIY waste could not be taken to Recycling Centres in either trailers or vans. The policy had been updated when some restrictions had been relaxed as agreed by the Communities and Place Committee in November 2022.

He assured Members that the Communities and Place Service was committed to ensuring a fair balance of customer needs and convenience with legislative responsibilities, including licensing requirements, and would be happy to review the policy. However, it was vital and appropriate that future action, including a possible trial, was informed by the outcomes of the review. He therefore proposed, as an amendment to the motion, that "thereafter trial the revised guidance for a three-month period" be replaced with "that the outcomes of the review will be considered by a Communities and Place Committee in 2023".

Mr A Graham accepted the proposed amendment to his motion.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the amended motion as follows:-

The current policy on access with trailers to recycling centres is causing confusion, inconvenience and additional unnecessary cost to householders. For example, old bricks, broken slabs and rockery stones (aka rubble) are acceptable in a car but not by trailer or van.

We therefore ask that the Council conducts a review of the Entry Guidance, Recycling Centres (HWRC) Conditions of Entry for trailers and vans, with a view to making the centres more accessible to householders disposing of non-commercial waste on their own behalf, and that the outcomes of the review will be considered by a Communities and Place Committee in 2023.

#### **(iv) No Mow May**

To encourage biodiversity and address the nature emergency, and to save the Council's limited financial and staff resources, this Council agrees to support Plantlife's "No Mow May" campaign by publicising it and by not cutting verges and other green spaces until later in the year, except where it is necessary for public and road user safety.

Signed: Ms K Willis Mr A Baldrey

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED**, in terms of Standing Order 12, that this motion be referred to the Corporate Resources Committee due to there being financial implications.

#### **(v) Highland Council negotiation with renewable energy companies**

The use of our natural resources for the generation of power is vital to the whole of the United Kingdom economy. The combined income from all renewable energy schemes in the Highlands continues to grow year on year and will only accelerate with the numerous wind, hydro and solar plants projected to come on line.

Despite this whilst some individual communities have benefitted to some extent from these developments there has been no fiscal, strategic benefit to the Council area as a whole despite the massive profits being generated.

Highland Council will begin negotiations with all renewable energy producers in order to provide a fair financial settlement which will be invested in facilities and infrastructure Highland wide and which will make a real difference to the lives of all of the people of the Highlands.

Signed: Mr R Jones Mr M Green Mr B Lobban

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:

- reference having been made to a similar motion to Full Council in December 2022, the Leader suggested the mover of the motion should follow it up;
- an amendment to the UK Government's Energy Bill included a clause relating to 5% of gross revenue from all renewable developments being paid into community benefit funds. The case for this had also been made to the Scottish Parliament, and it was hoped it was being moved towards;
- Inverness was the economic powerhouse of the Highlands and the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport would create a significant amount of new jobs and inward investment. Renewable developments presented an opportunity for the poorest areas of the Highlands to generate income, and concern was expressed regarding a Highland fund;
- one of the potential benefits of renewable energy revenue was that rebates could be provided to address fuel poverty in the poorest parts of the Highlands. Similarly, transport costs, which were greater in outlying areas, could be subsidised;
- renewable energy developments could be sold for significantly more than the installation costs, and it was hoped that capital gains would be looked at as well as income generation;
- attention was drawn to the National Grid live website which provided statistics on the type and source of energy being used to power the country, and it was emphasised that sources such as fossil fuels and nuclear energy were still required in addition to renewable energy;
- the motion was problematic in its current form in that it sought to introduce a new principle, namely that community benefit funds would go into a central Highland pot, and it was felt that the funds should remain in the impacted wards. In addition, the motion did not address the issue of parity in terms of negotiating power between communities and big international developers, and it would be good to see the Council offer specialist help to assist communities in brokering deals;
- it was worth looking at the constraint payments made to wind farm operators to shut down wind turbines for a day which amounted to approximately £800m nationwide, the equivalent of the budget for Additional Support Needs in schools in Scotland;
- people in Highland were currently paying approximately £400 more for electricity than the rest of Scotland, despite the Beauly to Denny power line transporting renewable energy from Highland to the Central Belt, and it was essential this was addressed;
- a fair financial settlement from energy producers was the only way the Council was going to get the money needed to invest in schools and roads infrastructure, and it

was important to make it clear to the public that it was for the benefit of all communities;

- Highland was being used as a production area yet the people of Highland were getting almost nothing out of it, and it was essential to keep up the pressure until a fair deal was reached;
- wealth generated through local economic activity often either went out of the local area or was enjoyed by a minority rather than the majority;
- local solutions were needed for local problems and, given the potential planning applications for Skye alone, a call was made for an island fund, perhaps under the umbrella of a Highland-wide fund;
- even within individual wards such as Aird and Loch Ness there was a lack of fairness in terms of community benefit funding that had to be addressed;
- when Scotland gained control over energy policy it would be in control of what it did with the energy it produced and what people had on its land;
- at present, Highland could only consume 10% of the energy it produced. In addition, the long-term potential of offshore wind energy coupled with green hydrogen production meant that the north of Scotland had the potential to satisfy the needs of Europe in the transition from fossil fuel;
- the Leader highlighted that he had met with the Director of Onshore Renewables Europe and the Director of Customers and Stakeholders, Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN), and the recent announcement by SSEN Transmission of a Community Benefit Fund; and
- the motion sought to empower Council officers to begin negotiations with renewable energy companies operating in the Highlands for the benefit of all of the people of the Highlands. Communities closest to installations should continue to receive disruption and visual impact payments but the whole Highland area was affected by renewable energy in some form.

Mr R Jones, seconded by Mr B Lobban, **MOVED** the motion.

Mr A MacDonald, seconded by Mrs H Crawford, moved an **AMENDMENT**, as follows:

“The use of our natural resources for the generation of power is vital to the whole of the United Kingdom economy. The Highlands is a vital source of renewable energy to meet our sustainable energy obligations and despite the detrimental visual impact, disruption in the construction stage and massive financial gain by developers and owners, the inhabitants of the Highlands sees relatively little benefit.

There has been an undoubted lack of parity with respect to negotiating power between the impacted communities and the renewable energy producers when entering into agreements should the optional community benefit be offered.

Highland Council will call upon the Scottish Government to issue ‘guidance’ urgently and the Westminster Government to legislate, for 5% of gross revenue from all renewable resources as a base line for Community Benefit.

Highland Council should set up a committee of Officers and Councillors to begin negotiations with all renewable energy developers and the transmission line operator, in order to strengthen the negotiating power of impacted communities, to provide a fair financial settlement for those impacted communities, with the financial benefits remaining within the impacted Wards.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 43 votes and the **AMENDMENT**

received 15 votes, with 1 abstention, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the Motion:**

Mr C Aitkin, Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr J Bruce, Mrs H Crawford, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr R Gunn, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mrs A MacLean, Ms M Nolan, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart.

**Abstentions:**

Mr L Fraser

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the motion.

- (vi) We, the undersigned, ask that Highland Council investigates the idea of placing High Fire Risk signs in locations at risk, similar to other countries in National Park type areas.

These signs would operate in a similar fashion to the existing ice warning signs that are in position, being covered up out of the high-risk season. Secondly, to investigate whether the existing NADICS signs on trunk routes could be utilised in a similar fashion.

This suggestion is made recognising the increase in dry Spring weather and the massive hill fire that previously occurred on the Caithness and Sutherland Border and, this year, the fire near Cannich.

Signed: Mr M Reiss Mr A Christie Mrs H Crawford Ms J McEwan

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was explained that the aim of this Motion at this stage was simply to investigate the introduction of high fire risk signage at areas which were vulnerable to wildfires to try and improve the situation;
- the fire crews who had attended all of the wildfires, including the one at Moy, were commended;
- with the Motion suggesting the used of the National Driver Information Control System signs, there was a recognition that to reduce the incidents of wildfires this had to be done in partnership with others. It was therefore important to develop a coordinated and cohesive approach to tackle this risk and to minimise the threat to people, property, place and the environment. The need to collaborate and communicate with other stakeholders was clear to develop a strategic framework

to define roles and responsibilities and it was therefore suggested to set up a short term cross-party working group, in consultation with Group Leaders, to inform a paper that will be brought to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in November and which would outline the Council's approach;

- the Scottish Outdoor Access Code made clear that no fires should be set on a whole range of sites and common sense needed to prevail. However, few would know or would have read the Access Code;
- signage was part of the strategy but consideration should be given to using YouTube and Instagram influencers;
- wildfires could also be started by discarded cigarettes, debris, glass and fireworks; and
- when signs were put up, they should also emphasise the importance of disposing of litter appropriately.

## Decision

The Council **AGREED** the motion with the additional wording as follows:

The Council agrees to set up a short term cross-party working group (in consultation with the Group Leaders) to inform a paper that will be brought to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in November and will outline the Council's approach.

- (vii) Council notes official Scottish Water figures showing that sewage was dumped at least 952 times in Highland.

Understands that across Scotland only 4% of sewage overflow points are monitored (144 out of 3,614), compared to around 90% in England, so the actual figure will be much worse!

Council believes that the local environment and everyone who uses our rivers and beaches deserve the highest possible protection;

Notes calls from campaigners for every sewage dump to be properly recorded and published, the introduction of legally binding targets for reducing these overflows, the upgrading of Scotland's ageing sewage system, an end to dumping around Scotland's best beaches and a faster process for the protection of bathing waters.

Council requests that the Council leader contacts both Scottish Water and the Scottish Government to endorse these calls, set out the council's concern and to request an urgent update on the situation in Highland.

Signed: Mrs T Robertson   Mr D Gregg   Mr A Graham   Mr M Baird   Mr J Grafton   Ms J McEwan   Mr R Gunn   Mr R Gale   Miss M MacCallum   Mr A MacDonald

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the amount of sewage dumped into Highland watercourses in one year ranged from 23,926m<sup>3</sup> at Allanfearn to 585,892m<sup>3</sup> at Fort William. At present there were only 8 locations recorded and published in Highland;
- whilst recent news reports commended Scottish Water as doing a better job than their English counterparts, a recent report had commented that it "could do better";
- the Highland's natural environment and its beauty attracted many visitors to the

area. It was important therefore to recognise the importance of the sea as a carbon sink and protection of the marine environment was as important as the protection and restoration of the peatlands;

- the Council had declared a Climate Emergency and was moving towards a greener way of working;
- wild swimming was becoming more popular and engaged in all year round and a clear process was needed for the protection of bathing waters;
- Nairn Central had won Scotland's Beach award, celebrated 30 years of gaining this award. However, with Nairn on the Scottish Water list dumping 59,033m<sup>3</sup> of sewage, it was questioned how longer the beach would be able maintain the standard required to achieve the award;
- there had been numerous complaints of the foul odours from Allanfeearn. Scottish Water maintained this emanated from seaweed but 23,926m<sup>3</sup> of sewage was dumped into the Firth from that location;
- every sewage spill needed to be properly recorded and published with legally binding targets for reducing overflows and fines imposed for failures;
- constituents deserved waters of a decent quality and given the disparity in the degree of monitoring the level of sewage dumped could be higher. Standards had changed and constituents were now more environmentally aware and any repeated Combined Sewage Overflows (CSO) should be investigated and the infrastructure altered accordingly;
- Scotland's ageing sewage system needed to be upgraded. The system in place meant that rainwater from roofs and roads went into the same pipe as toilet waste. There was limited storage capacity in the system and it was designed to overflow at the CSO. This was essentially to prevent worse flooding;
- some CSOs discharged into rivers and a potential workshop would identify where the Council should focus the attention of the Regulator and allow a better evidence based letter of Highland's need to be sent to Scottish Water and the Scottish Government;
- the environmental impact of the discharge was dependent on various factors including the capacity of the sewer to transfer the initial storm flows to treatment works, the type of CSO and where the discharge point was;
- in December 2021 Scottish Water had committed an additional £500m of investment, including installation of an additional 1000 CSO monitors, by December 2024. Information as to where they were and how their location had been selected would be beneficial;
- an estimated £13bn would be required to rebuild sewer systems to eliminate all overflows. This would be disruptive and carbon intensive work and result in ongoing energy requirements for additional treatment;
- ideally surface water could be used to create 'blue-green infrastructure' with amenity and biodiversity benefits but this was difficult to achieve;
- it was important not to cause public concern or panic about sewage pollution unnecessarily;
- it was suggested a Member workshop could be held with SEPA and Scottish Water on the impact of CSOs on the rivers and beaches in Highland with a focus on delivering environmental improvements and this substitute the two last paragraphs of the motion. However, some felt this would delay matters and weakened the motion and, rather, this could be added to the Motion instead;
- Members constantly asked for workshops and it was questioned if this was best use of officers' time and decisive action should be taken instead; and
- it was vital that the number of sewage outflow points were increased to be more in line with England.

Mrs T Robertson, seconded by Mr D Gregg, **MOVED** the motion.

Mr D Fraser, seconded by Mr K Rosie, moved an **AMENDMENT**, to remove the last two paragraphs of the motion and replace with “Council requests that the Council leader writes to SEPA & Scottish Water seeking a member workshop on the impact of CSOs on the rivers and beaches in Highland with a focus on delivering environmental improvements”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 22 and the **AMENDMENT** received 31 votes, with 2 abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the Motion:**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mrs H Crawford, Mr L Fraser, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr R Gunn, Mr R Gale, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Ms M Nolan, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Siggers, Mr R Stewart.

**For the Amendment:**

Ms S Atkin, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr C Munro, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

**Abstentions:**

Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the following amended motion:

Council notes official Scottish Water figures showing that sewage was dumped at least 952 times in Highland.

Understands that across Scotland only 4% of sewage overflow points are monitored (144 out of 3,614), compared to around 90% in England, so the actual figure will be much worse!

Council believes that the local environment and everyone who uses our rivers and beaches deserve the highest possible protection;

Council requests that the Council leader writes to SEPA & Scottish Water seeking a member workshop on the impact of CSOs on the rivers and beaches in Highland with a focus on delivering environmental improvements.

- (viii) At the recent Community and Places meeting and following the presentation of the Highland Policing Plan, we were told that Northern Division, as a result of budget cuts, will be losing 9 officers from the Highlands and on top of that the overtime budget will be cut by 50% further reducing the availability of Police Officers across the region.

The steady reduction in Police numbers over a period of years since the introduction of

Police Scotland has led to a serious lack of front-line Police Officers. For example, often we have been told that there are no officers on duty in large parts of the Highlands with officers sent long distances to cover emergency calls.

The recent “Highland Cops” programme on television highlighted the vast and unique geography of the Highland “Beat” and the challenges faced by officers to provide an effective Police service in the region.

When the new Chief Superintendent gave a presentation to the Council on his appointment, he made much of how the TV programme would help to recruit officers, however the reality is that rather than recruiting additional officers we are facing a reduction that will significantly impact the level of Police availability on the ground.

In addition due to the sheer size of the area and the ever reducing number of Police Officers communities are not getting equitable access to Police resources resulting in a significant risk as a result of response times, particularly in remote and rural locations.

While it is noted that Police Officers do a tremendous job given the very limited resources on hand the Policing model for the Highlands is clearly not fit for purpose.

That being the case this council calls upon the Leader to write to the Justice Minister to insist that the proposed cuts to Police Numbers and overtime availability are cancelled and that a review of Policing numbers is carried out as a matter of urgency.

Signed: Mr R Gunn Mrs T Robertson Mr D Gregg Mrs T Robertson Mr M Baird Mrs A MacLean Mrs J McEwan

As a broadly similar Motion had been debated within the previous 6 months, discussion on this Motion would require a suspension of Standing Order 34.

Mr R Gunn, seconded by Ms J McEwan, **MOVED** the suspension of Standing Order 34.

Mr B Lobban, seconded by Mr R Bremner, moved an **AMENDMENT** not to suspend Standing Order 34.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 21 and the **AMENDMENT** received 32 votes, with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the Motion:**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mrs H Crawford, Mr L Fraser, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr R Gunn, Mr R Gale, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Mr S Kennedy, Ms M MacCallum, , Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Ms M Nolan, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair.

**For the Amendment:**

Ms S Atkin, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

## **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** not to suspend Standing Order 34.

### **(ix)** Action towards Net Zero

If the Net Zero strategy is to succeed, and we are to meet our legal commitments, it is essential that the Net Zero Strategy is central to all decision-making in the Council.

To achieve this, this Council therefore agrees that the Chair of the Climate Change Committee, or if not available their depute, attend meetings of the Senior Leadership Group and the forthcoming Budget Review Group, to promote the Net Zero Strategy in all political decision-making and to ensure the action required to meet our Net Zero targets is embedded across all Council activities.

Signed: Mr C Ballance Mr R MacKintosh

The Council **NOTED** that this motion had been withdrawn.

### **(x)** Allotments

We note that the Council is currently reviewing its allotments policy.

To further progress the aims of The Highland Council's food growing strategy for the Highlands, Highland Council therefore asks council officers to include in this review a list of existing and potential sites for council-owned and managed allotments sites throughout the Highlands, designed to encourage and enable new allotments. The proposals should also include draft plans to invite and support registrations of interest from interested individuals and groups.

Signed: Mr R Mackintosh Ms K Willis

The Council **DEFERRED** consideration of this Notice of Motion, should the signatories so wish in terms of Standing Order 12, to the next meeting of the Council due to lack of time.

## **7. Membership of the Council Ballrachd na Comhairle**

The Council **NOTED** that Mrs Sarah Rawlings had tendered her resignation as a Member of the Council with effect from 31 July 2023. In this regard, a By-Election for Ward 7 (Tain and Easter Ross) would be held on Thursday, 28 September 2023.

The Convener, on behalf of fellow Members, thanked Ms Rawlings for her service, particularly in her role as Armed Forces and Veteran Champion.

## **8. Membership of Committees, etc Ballrachd Chomataidhean, msaa**

The Council:-

### **i. Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group**

**AGREED** the membership as follows:-

Mrs H Crawford, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr S Kennedy, Mr P Logue, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs P Munro, Ms M Nolan, Mrs T Robertson.

Disappointment was expressed that there was not a member of the Green Party on this Group. However, it was explained that membership had been apportioned on political balance but, as with all Working Groups/Sub Committees, it was open to any Elected Member to attend and, with the authority of the Chair, to speak. Assurances were given that proper and full scrutiny would be undertaken.

ii. **Armed Forces and Veterans Champion**

**AGREED** to appoint Ms L Niven as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion.

iii. **Pensions Committee**

**AGREED** to appoint Mrs T Robertson in place of Mr A MacDonald.

9. **Annual accounts for the year to 31 March 2023, and Near-final revenue out turn for the year.**

**Cunntasan bliadhna airson na bliadhna gu 31 Màrt 2023 agus aithisg fìor chosgais faisg air deireannach airson na bliadhna**

**Transparency Statement: Mrs J Hendry made Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a close family member was an employee of High Life Highland. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/17/23 dated 14 June 2023 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members were reminded to restrict their questions to the accounts and out turn;
- the Finance staff who had worked on the annual accounts were thanked for their efforts, as were the people and businesses of the Highlands who had played their part in supporting the work of the Council;
- Council reserves were at a peak but would be required in the current and coming years to balance the Council's budget, so it was important that funds were used where possible for income-generating activities;
- the reserves had reached a peak due to a Covid-related break in loan repayments and the anticipated downward trend in the level of reserves was not sustainable. It was clarified that the Council was not permitted to go into a deficit financial position;
- some Members suggested the Council should have increased Council housing rent levels to facilitate continued non-essential maintenance, with reference to the resultant lowering of the value of the housing stock, while others pointed out that the decision to maintain rents at the agreed level had been to protect vulnerable residents from poverty during the cost of living crisis. Consideration should be given to the issues around undertaking non statutory activities given the concerning budget position being faced in the coming years;
- information was sought in relation to actuarial assumptions about life expectancy and the pension fund and it was explained that this could be addressed through the Pensions Committee and that the Council was obliged to abide by actuarial assumptions in relation to the accounts;

- information relating to the underspend and vacancies in Health and Social Care would be reported through the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee; and
- it was clarified that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was required to deliver a balanced budget and general Council reserves could not be used to balance the HRA budget.

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. that received the unaudited Annual Accounts for the Highland Council; Highland Charities Trust; Highland Charitable Trust; and the Highland Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2023 and that these would be presented to the appointed auditor by the prescribed date of the 30 June 2023; and
- ii. the near final out-turn for the 2022/23 financial year, subject to audit, as set out in section 6 of the report.

## **10. Budget Update – Revenue and Capital Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidseat – Teachd-a-steach agus Calpa**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**

**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

**Mrs J Hendry - as a close family member was an employee of High Life Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/18/23 dated 15 June 2023 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the struggle to achieve a balanced budget was likely to continue and intensify in the year ahead and areas being considered to address the challenges included procurement, partner agency contract reviews and investment in income generation. Redesign and transformation had been useful in previous years and would be again, as would further consideration of the capital programme and earmarked balances. Recruitment controls were in place, with unintended savings being achieved through posts that were proving difficult to fill;
- the efforts of officers to balance the budget were appreciated;
- concern was expressed that the Council's reserves were on track to be depleted by 2026-27 and attention was drawn to the urgent need to resolve this, which it was considered was not properly covered in the report. A timeline for actions was called for, with engagement across the Council, recognising that external factors could be difficult to predict;
- the budget agreed in March 2023 had included £3.2m of Council tax on second homes which would have to be repaid but which had not been further reported to Resources or the Council;
- openness, transparency and collaborative work were essential to balance the budget and the Administration were urged to involve other political groups in their deliberations. This would be further considered by the Senior Leadership Group;
- considerable concern was expressed at the Scottish Government delay in announcing the LEIP Phase 3 school bids outcome and it was suggested a letter

be sent to the Government, signed by all of the Council group leaders, to expediate a decision on this funding that would be used for Beauly Primary, Park Primary, Dunvegan Primary, Tornagrain Primary and St Clements School. It was acknowledged that all 32 Scottish local authorities were waiting for the decision on this;

- improvements to active travel in various locations were welcomed. However some of these sums spent were significant and it was suggested the funds might be better used for the school estate. It was pointed out that the £600k spent on active travel on the Black Isle had been provided by Sustrans and gratitude for this sum was expressed;
- clearer information was sought on the detail about ear marked reserves at paragraph 9.1 of the report;
- it was queried whether the Council had sufficient numbers of staff in senior financial positions to tackle the challenges with the budget and the Chief Executive outlined actions being taken in this regard;
- Mr A MacDonald referred to correspondence he had forwarded to officers regarding an offer from Inverlussa Marine Services to provide a hybrid replacement vessel for the Corran Ferry;
- several of the issues raised under Item 9 would have been more relevant to this item;
- many of the issues and themes of concern in the budget were similar to those faced by previous Council Administrations;
- the street lighting budget was being investigated for savings;
- much of the uncertainty in the report resulted from uncertainty about funding streams and it would be helpful if the Scottish and UK Governments could provide more sustainable funding settlements;
- information was sought, and provided, on progress with the review of High Life Highland's Service Delivery Contract, which was due to be reported on in September 2023;
- in relation to spending controls and energy use, the cheapest form of energy was that which was never used; and
- it was possible the Transient Visitor Levy would be introduced in around 2025, bringing additional income, and in this regard Members were urged to complete the consultation that had recently been opened.

### ***Decision***

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. the update provided in the report regarding the range of budget related actions set out in the report;
- ii. that a mid-year budget report would come to the Council meeting in September; and
- iii. the update provided regarding the capital programme review, and timescale for consideration by Members.

## **11. Developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy A' Leasachadh Ro-innleachd Togail Stòrais Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/19/23 dated 14 June 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- developing this Strategy was also about reinvigorating the Council's approach and identifying new work. Members' participation in the workshops was encouraged;
- this would keep the Highland Pound in Highland, especially by supporting local business through the procurement process thus providing them the opportunity to expand. It was hoped that this business-focused strategy would be supported by individuals, the Federation of Small Businesses and local Chambers of Commerce;
- the report's content on "developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy" was welcomed as it set the scene well on this subject and allowed a glimpse of what could be achieved;
- community wealth building was a broad title which could cause confusion and would mean different things to many people;
- in the past it was called community benefit, which was separate from the planning process, but this now offered scope for new opportunities in that regard. It would be interesting to see how this could relate to planning especially given the recent publication of NPF 4 and the recognition it placed under Policy 25 on "community wealth building". The intention behind that policy was at encouraging, promoting and facilitating a new strategic approach to economic development that provided a practical model for building a wellbeing economy at local, regional and national levels;
- if this could be developed further then the potential outcome would be to help support local employment and supply chains;
- development plans should be aligned with these aims and set our community wealth building priorities and opportunities to tackle economic disadvantage and inequality and provide benefits for local communities;
- given the amount of renewable energy projects being progressed in Highland, including on and off shore wind energy projects, there was an opportunity to look at these projects and see how they could make a significant contribution towards achieving meaningful community wealth building;
- there was a wide range of cooperatives in Highland but there was scope for a lot more and it was suggested that the Council might want to consider joining the Cooperative Councils Innovation Network with a view to expanding and growing employee-owned cooperative businesses;
- community asset transfers regularly encountered difficulties and, at times, cost local organisations a considerable amount of money in legal fees and it was important to work on this to better facilitate these organisations with the process;
- there was a wide range of groups involved in this and more consideration needed to be given to how engagement would work. As a result a communication plan needed to be drawn up;
- it was hoped anchor organisations (large, locally-rooted organisations) would include community councils;
- given the very mixed success of community partnerships across Highland it was queried what could be done to strengthen the ability of partnerships to fully engage with anchor organisations;
- one of the pillars of Community Wealth Building was fair employment and labour markets, including the living wage;
- one of the case studies in the report related to marine recreation and it was hoped that this could be linked to small scale commercial fishing; and
- Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited was already in place offering financial support and fellow Members were encouraged to signpost this to the people in their Wards.

## ***Decision***

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the background to Community Wealth Building and the work already being undertaken which contributes to this approach; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposed approach for developing a Community Wealth Building strategy for Highland Council set out in Section 6 of the report.

**12. Update on Outline Business Case for Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport**  
**Cunntas às Ùr mun Chùis Ghnothachais airson Saor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Caolas Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/20/23 dated 14 June 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was good to see this moving forward at a reasonable pace and this would help to ensure the benefit everyone hoped for would be achieved;
- the report was welcomed as it was addressing various issues for the Outline Business Case, such as seed funding and non domestic rates but, more importantly, community engagement. As had been said before it was essential communities were on board with the Inverness and Cromarty Green Freeport;
- in relation to the £25m of seed funding, it was queried, and explained, what analysis of risk had been undertaken of the bids;
- the Council was the responsible body and was therefore duty bound to ensure matters were done properly;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that the requirements required in NPF4, such as 20 minute neighbourhoods, would be taken into account going forward. It was also important, as part of the planning process, to consider the need for green spaces;
- information was sought, and provided, how often the Monitoring Group would meet. Due notice to Members would be provided;
- confirmation was sought about what impact, if any, the two new investment zones would have, namely Glasgow City and north-east Scotland regions, as recently announced by the Scottish and UK Governments. This could be considered in more detail at the first meeting of the Monitoring Group along with the Net Zero Strategy;
- the report highlighted that the Council, through Inverness Common Good Fund account, were landowners within the Inverness tax site and clarification was sought as to how much land was in the ownership of the Council and how much in the ownership of the Common Good Fund. The funding requirement from the Council for the Outline Business Case was £25,000, funded from the economic prosperity fund budget, but perhaps it should come from the Common Good Fund instead; and
- It was pleasing to hear that Ardersier Port had joined the consortium.

***Decision***

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in the preparation of the Outline Business Case;
- ii. **AGREED** to the request from the Board of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth

- Green Freeport for a financial contribution from the Highland Council of £25,000 towards the costs of the preparation of the Outline Business Case; and
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to report the Outline Business Case to a future Council meeting prior to submission to UK and Scottish Governments.

**13. Renewable Investment in Solar and Battery Storage**  
**Tasgadh So-ùrachaidh ann an Stòradh Grèine is Bataraidh**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/21/23 dated 7 June 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the Members of the Redesign Board and the team were thanked for their hard work in producing the report and the progress made on the renewable investment business case. In addition, the following issues were raised:-

- the report provided a platform and a basis for the strategy of the Council, assisting in generating income, and allowing for the sustainable support of local industries and communities;
- use of renewable energies, such as solar PV panels, to power the Council estate was welcomed. In this regard, potential sites in Inverness, Tain, Brora and Wick had been identified to become solar farms, with additional sites to eventually be included across the highlands;
- whilst investment into renewable energy was deemed a fantastic opportunity to assist local community wealth building, it was queried how the Highland Council would synthesise the opportunity to accomplish this;
- information was sought regarding the difference between Council's approach compared to Essex Council's approach in which a considerable amount of money had been lost in their renewable energy investments;
- it was queried if there would be a section 95 officer assessment within the business case. In addition, it was also queried if the business case would include; if the Council leased the assets, an assessment of the rates of return if the Council put planning permission on the land and leased it to a third party; and additional alternative options;
- it was queried if Torvean quarry would be solar powered, battery powered, or included an element of both;
- it was emphasised that projects needed to be appropriately researched and planned to get the best value out of public funds;
- Members welcomed the potential revenue and savings which could be produced by this renewable energy investment but urged caution before investing public funds into developing renewable energy farms, especially in view of the Council's current financial position and the need for investing in school infrastructure across highland;
- battery storage should be located closer to the central belt to enable faster power on demand for higher populated areas;
- it was questioned what the differences were between the Council's renewable energy proposals and the Highland Renewable Energy Company's proposals;
- Members expressed confidence in officers to take this report forward and every effort should be made to retain these staff and their expertise;
- it was requested that battery storage be made up from alternative materials other than lithium to get ahead of the curve;
- it was queried what lease safeguards would be in place if Common Good land was selected for renewable energy farms and if the lease would be to the Council or the partner company. It was also queried if there would be dividends on profits to the local ward Common Good fund in each area. In addition, it was highlighted

- that any use of Common Good land should be thoroughly examined and agreements should be rock solid with all risks thoroughly reviewed;
- it was confirmed that the anticipated time scale for producing a fully costed investment plan would be 6 to 9 months;
  - communities needed to get more out of renewable energy being captured in their area than just rent and it was felt that communities and the Council were in a strong position to negotiate this;
  - it was queried what the current connection time to the national grid was; and
  - as the land for a solar wind farm needed to produce 50 megawatts, the required land mass was estimated to be 250 acres, it was queried if the Council owned the required amount of land.

### ***Decision***

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** progress to date in evaluating and identifying both the cost saving and income generation potential of further development of the Council's Solar PV assets;
- ii. **AGREED** the development of a business case for the development of solar PPA self-generation model; and
- iii. **AGREED** the development of the business case for the development of utility grade sites identified as viable to a full business plan for development potential in both solar and battery storage.

## **14. Net Zero Strategy Ro-innleachd Neoni Lom**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/22/23 dated 12 June 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the Climate Change team, officers and Members were thanked for their hard work in relation to producing the net zero strategy. In addition, the following issues were raised:-

- the Convener clarified that the appendix on page 147 should state that Members 'are strongly advised to take part in the training' and that it was not compulsory to do so. In this regard, whilst Council staff net zero training might be mandatory, Members stressed the wording around this should be carefully considered as to what was expected from them;
- it was felt that if progress towards net zero was not taken seriously and did not increase it would lead to dire health consequences;
- Members were reminded that the Climate Change Committee had approved the net zero strategy which had now been presented to full Council;
- it was recognised that for the Council to meet its binding targets and legislative actions, these actions had to be embedded in all Services. In this regard, staff engagement and training were essential to provide confidence in addressing the

- scale and urgency of the climate change emergency;
- there was a reputational risk if all actions were not delivered at pace to meet the Scottish Government's ambitions for local authorities;
- Members were urged to take on board the serious nature of achieving net zero and to include the strategy and those promoting it in every decision that was taken to ensure there was no contradictions in the decision making process. In this regard, assurance was provided by Members that collaborative working to achieve net zero would continue;
- it was requested that the strategy report include a standalone section covering how to address Poverty and its many associated aspects;
- it was queried where the Council would source the £261m needed for housing stock investments to improve their energy efficiency and whether this would be from UK Government, Scottish Government or the repurposing of funds; and
- regarding section 3.1 of the strategy report, it was queried what the anticipated amount of additional upfront costs would be.

### ***Decision***

The Council:-

- AGREED** the Net Zero Strategy subject to (a) making it clear under the People Section, sub-section Training and Literacy, that Members would be strongly advised to take part in training, as opposed to it being mandatory; and (b) the inclusion of page numbers;
- NOTED** that a fully costed action plan would be developed for consideration by 14 December 2023; and
- AGREED** to include a stand-alone section within the strategy report a section on Poverty.

## **15. Governance Review Ath-sgrùdadh Coileanaidh**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/23/23 dated 14 June 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

This report proposed the next steps in taking the Governance Review forward building on the work which had already taken place in 2019 but which had been interrupted by the Covid pandemic. An Internal Audit had taken place in 2022 and the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had approved recommendations regarding local democracy, including the Area Committee structure. A recent Members' survey had also highlighted that Members felt the time was right for a review. It was proposed the Group would meet in August and September to develop recommendations for Council approval. Members were encouraged to feed in any views/ideas they might have to help inform the development of improvement proposals. In addition, it was again confirmed that all Working Groups/Sub Committees were open to any Elected Member to attend and, with the authority of the Chair, to speak.

### ***Decision***

the Council **AGREED**:-

- the membership of the Steering Group as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- the Terms of Reference of the Steering Group as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report; and

iii. the next steps as set out in paragraph 6 of the report.

**16. Alternative Delivery Model for the Provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure**  
**Modal Libhrigidh Eile airson Solar Bun-structair Teàirrdsidh do Charbadan Dealain**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**  
**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/24/23 dated 14 June 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the aim was to deliver a solution that would stand up to legal scrutiny and deliver a sustainable best value resolution, both environmentally and financially. Best Value would be achieved by working with the Shared Procurement Services, made up of Highland, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Councils;
- the initiative was from Transport Scotland to remove the budget pressures from Councils. It was an alternative delivery model for EV chargers going forward;
- the proposals would help to protect the interests of people across Highland for the foreseeable future;
- strategically, the Private Public Partnership model, where a share of revenue could provide for the non-profitable areas, was the way forward not only for EV chargers but for other areas of the Council in the future;
- the report stated that there might be many areas where public EV infrastructure would not be commercially viable and private investment might be difficult to attract. This had to be taken into account in light of the Council's decision to charge 70p per unit, specifically to attract private investment. It was suggested this now needed to be reviewed to ensure that no body was being disadvantaged by these high charges;
- it was acknowledged that the unit price would have to be agreed with the private sector but it was hoped the ultimate decision would remain with the Council;
- it was essential that this network of EV chargers paid for itself so that there was no impact on any Council services;
- it was important to look at all options, particularly as there was also an opportunity in the Highlands to develop the Hydrogen infrastructure and this could be considered as another way of fuelling cars in the future. It was suggested that this could be the subject of a future report to Council;
- there was a real symbiosis between the reports on the agenda and, in particular, it was felt that this report linked well with the Developing a Community Wealth Building Strategy item. It was hoped a partnership model could be developed which would bring skills, employment and the establishment of local business, on a sustainable basis, to Highland;
- it was important to give consumers confidence to make the transition from petrol/diesel cars to electric and this included ensuring that EV chargers were reliable and affordable;
- there was a danger that remote or rural locations could lose out due to a lack of profit incentive within the private sector;

- the concession and landlord model was being considered and it would be interesting to know what this looked like in practise;
- information was sought about whether or not the existing Council EV chargers would transfer to the private sector. In response, it was confirmed that these would be offered but the Council would maintain ownership whilst the private sector partner would run, operate and maintain the EV Chargers;
- it was questioned if the privatisation of ChargePlaced Scotland would have any impact and if it would continue to operate as present across Highland;
- information was also sought as to how the discussions with the other Local Authorities and public sector organisations were progressing;
- there was a £7.4m contribution from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland and the compilation of the tender would be the 3 local authorities stake; and
- it was hoped that it would essentially remain a publicly owned service.

### ***Decision***

The Council:-

- AGREED** the undertaking of a collaborative procurement process for an Alternative Delivery Model for the provision of Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure (across the Shared Service areas and being available to other partners/areas) via a negotiated procedure with competitive dialogue in compliance with the Scottish Procurement Regulations; and
- NOTED** the estimated expenditure of up to £7.4m grant funding from the Scottish Government/Transport Scotland for the duration of the contract estimated as commencing on 1 April 2024, for a period of 10 years, with the option to extend by an additional 5 year plus 5-year agreement up to 20 years if required. This funding represents a contribution to Phase 1 of the project and allows the Councils to had influence over aspects of the provision to ensure fair access to charging infrastructure for all.

## **17. Members' Learning and Development Programme Prògram Ionnsachaidh is Leasachaidh Bhall**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/25/23 dated 29 June 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

### ***Decision***

The Council:-

- NOTED** the establishment of the Short Life Members' Working Group;
- AGREED** the Terms of Reference of the Working Group as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- AGREED** to hold a Members' workshop in August 2023 to provide Members with the opportunity to shape the refreshed Learning and Development Programme; and
- NOTED** the next steps with the view of presenting a refreshed Learning and Development Programme for Council approval in October 2023.

## **18. Decision of Standards Commission for Scotland – Hearing Co-dhùnaidhean Coimisean Inbhean na h-Alba – Èisteachd**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/26/23 dated 11 June 2023 by the Head of Legal and Governance/Monitoring Officer.

### ***Decision***

The Council **NOTED** the decision of the Standards Commission of Scotland.

#### **19. Timetable of Meetings Clàr-ama Choinneamhan**

The Council:-

- i. **AGREED**, following the cancellation of the Black Isle Area Committee on 23 May 2023, that its next meeting take place on 15 August 2023; and
- ii. **NOTED**, following the approval of the Convener and Area Chair due to urgent business, the Special meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee on 26 June.

#### **20. Deeds Executed Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

There had been circulated a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 11 May 2023 which were **NOTED**.

#### **21. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Council **AGREED** that, during the recess period, powers be granted to the Interim Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officers, in consultation with the Convener, Leader of the Council, relevant Committee Chair and the Leader of the Opposition, to deal with issues arising during that time and that a report would be prepared for the first meeting of the Council or relevant Committee following the period where these powers had been exercised.

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

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should 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 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

#### **23. Independent Care Home Provision – Risk and Sustainability Update Solar Dhachaighean-Cùraim Neo-eisimeileach – Cunntas às Ùr mu Chunnart is Sheasmhachd**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/27/23 dated 19 June 2023

by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

***Decision***

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

The meeting ended at 7:15 pm