

Minutes of Meetings

To be submitted to the Council

On

14 September 2023

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Education Committee	7 September 2023	To follow

**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** **Foilseachaidhean 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 Louden 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 needed 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 Aitken, 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 Siggers, 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 manifold, 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 Aitken, 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, 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 Aitken, 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 23,926m³ at Allanfearn to 585,892m³ 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 59,033m³ 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 Allanfearn. Scottish Water maintained this emanated from seaweed but 23,926m³ 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 be substituted for the two last paragraphs of the motion. However, some felt this would delay matters and weaken 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 Aitken, 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 Aitken, 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 bliadhnail 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 expedite a decision on this funding that would be used for Beaully 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 the 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 earmarked 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 for Council staff net zero training would 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:-

- i. **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;
- ii. **NOTED** that a fully costed action plan would be developed for consideration by 14 December 2023; and
- iii. **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**:-

- i. the membership of the Steering Group as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. 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:-

- i. **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
- ii. **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:-

- i. **NOTED** the establishment of the Short Life Members' Working Group;
- ii. **AGREED** the Terms of Reference of the Working Group as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** to hold a Members' workshop in August 2023 to provide Members with the opportunity to shape the refreshed Learning and Development Programme; and
- iv. **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

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn on 7 August at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr M Green
Ms B Jarvie (remote)
Mr P Oldham (remote)

In Attendance:

Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager – Economic Development and Regeneration
Mr A Bryce, Project Officer (Active Travel)
Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Nick Nethercott, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr M Green in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 10 – Ms B Jarvie

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not required to be exercised in relation to the business of the Nairnshire Committee.

4. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Chair spoke to three items of good news as follows:-

- the Feasibility Study for the Recycling Centre was progressing well. A draft report was expected within the following two weeks with a final report to be ready at the end of the month;
- the Local Place Plan was progressing well and congratulations were extended to Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise for their efforts on this; and
- congratulations were extended to the Nairnshire Farming Society for their hard work, creativity and professionalism in making the Nairn Farmers' show a successful event.

During discussion, Members commented on the following additional items of good news:-

- the roll out of 20mph Speed Limits had begun in Nairn and had received mainly positive feedback from members of the public;
- Team Hamish had received planning permission for Phase 2 of their project on Common Good land at the Links;
- congratulations were extended to Nairn Academy students for their achievements and a welcome was extended to new first year students;
- Queenspark Residents Association had celebrated their first Anniversary and had achieved great things including Picnic in the Park; and
- the Nairnshire Book and Arts Festival and Nairn Highland Games would be taking place later in the summer.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

In terms of Standing order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to take item 12 followed by item 11 at this stage.

12. **Winter Service Plan for 2023/24** **Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No NC/17/23 dated 12 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the use of monitoring stations to provide data to inform decisions around road treatment was commended;
- attention was drawn to the service map not showing the agreed updated route through the Lochloy Estate. The Interim Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment undertook to ensure that the map was updated to reflect the agreed route;
- it was requested that all gritter drivers be made aware of changes to routes as there had been some issues with this previously;
- information was sought on how the new 20mph zones would impact on the delivery of the service and what had been put in place to accommodate this; and

- information was sought, and provided, as to how many spare gritters could be available if needed.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24.

**11. Proposed Deletion from the list of Roads - U2218 McDermott's Road, Ardersier
Rathaidean Sgìre Inbhir Narann – Dubhadh às ga Mholadh bho liosta nan
Rathaidean Poblach – U2218 Rathad MhicDiarmaid, Àird nan Saor**

On 21 March 2023 the Nairnshire Committee had deferred the decision on de-listing McDermotts Road, Ardersier until legal advice had been received on the preservation of access and repair post de-listing. The owners of Ardersier Port had since withdrawn their request to have McDermotts Road de-listed.

During the discussion, it was queried whether the works scheduled to take place at the junction with the A96 were being led by the Council or Transport Scotland. The Interim Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment undertook to make investigations into the nature of this work and feed back to Members.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** that the owners of Ardersier Port had since withdrawn their request to have McDermotts Road de-listed; and
- AGREED** Port invitation to Nairnshire Members for a site visit would be arranged with appropriate Area and Strategic Committee Members in due course.

**5. Fire Performance Report - Annual Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Smàlaidh – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There had been circulated Report No NC/12/23 dated 21 July 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the swift and professional action of the Fire Service at the fire on Harbour Street. In response to a question, it was stated that it was not safe to carry out an investigation after the fire to ascertain the cause; and
- in response to a query about recruitment, it was confirmed that the Nairn Station was at full capacity with both appliances being available a large percentage of the time.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

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

The Committee resolved that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for item 7 only on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**7. Nairn Common Good Fund – Grant Street Yard and Store
Maoin Math Coitchean Inbhir Narann – Lios agus Stòr Shràid nan Granddach**

There had been circulated Report No NC/13/23 dated 17 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

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

**8. Nairn Harbour Active Travel Footpath Link
Ceangal Ceum-coise Siubhal Gnìomhach Caladh Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated Report No NC/14/23 dated 12 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment

During the discussion the following main points were raised:-

- congratulations were extended to the Active Travel Team and the Access Panel for the project;
- surprise was expressed at the high cost of the project;
- the project was utilising a route that people were already using and making it safer;
- it was queried whether the new disabled parking bays could be located on the more level surface nearer the harbour; and
- on the point being raised it was clarified that signage options for cyclists were being explored.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of this report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the development of the Nairn Harbour Active Travel Footpath Link upon Common Good Land; and
- iii. **AGREED** that placement of affected disabled parking bays would be amended in line with Member comments.

**9. Nairn Common Good – Harbour Street Consultation and Proposal.
Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Co-chomhairleachadh agus Moladh Sràid a' Chalaigh**

There had been circulated Report No NC/15/23 dated 11 July 2023 by Acting Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance and Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the issues raised in the consultation had been effectively and comprehensively addressed and the work done for this consultation could be used as a framework for possible future consultations;
- concern was expressed that disposal at nil value would deliver no financial benefit to the Common Good Fund;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Greenhive would cover all costs relating to the consultation that had been incurred to date;

- it was queried whether the current situation concerning the strip of land could be the result of an historical conveyancing error;
- reference was made to the fact that Greenhive had undertaken to do the investigation and had been transparent about their findings, the support for the proposed solution from the neighbouring business and the current untidy state of the area of land which would be improved following its sale to Greenhive;
- it was queried whether it would be possible for Nairn Common Good Fund to be given first offer if the land was to be sold in the future; and
- one Member was in favour of giving the land to Greenhive at no cost. However, the majority were in favour of offering the land for sale to Greenhive for a cost of £500.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at Appendix 1;
- APPROVED** the responses to the issues raised in connection with the proposal for publication on the Council's website as contained in the table in Appendix 1;
- AGREED** to dispose of the area of land adjacent to the Seaman's Hall for the reasons outlined in the report; and
- AGREED** to offer the land for sale to Greenhive for £500.

10. Nairn Common Good Fund – Quarter 1 Financial Monitoring Report Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Aithisg Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail Cairteil 1

Transparency Statement: Ms B Jarvie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Member of the Nairn Book and Arts Festival Committee but, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No NC/16/23 dated 18 July 2023 by Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was clarified that money from both the sale of the Grant St Yard and the Community Regeneration Fund was being requested to be ring-fenced for the re-development of the Harbour Street Public Toilets site, and that the funds for the feasibility study would come from the Place-Based Development Fund;
- concerns were expressed over the possibility of the Splash Pad maintenance becoming a recurring cost for the Common Good Fund;
- information was sought and provided on how maintenance costs for assets on Common Good land were covered;
- it was queried whether an invitation to pay scheme could be implemented for the Splash Pad in order to help cover future maintenance costs; and
- the importance of having funds available for maintenance so that equipment could continue to be in use was highlighted.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of the NCGF as shown in the Quarter 1 Revenue Monitoring Statement against Budget for 2023/24;
- ii. **AGREED** that income received in 2023/24 from the sale of the Grant Street Yard and Store (as detailed at item 7 on the agenda) was ringfenced for use on the redevelopment of the Harbour Street former public toilet site; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the potential for implementing an invitation to pay scheme would be investigated and the outcome reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

13. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since the May Committee:-

Organisation	Project	Amount
Ward Management Team (Nairn Splashpad)	Specialist Cleaning	£3,484

14. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 15 May 2023 which had been approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

15. Community Regeneration Fund 2023/24 Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd 23/24

There had been circulated Report No NC/18/23 dated 2 August 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion the building up of capital funds for a development which would benefit the community and generate income was welcomed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the standard delivery approach of the Community Regeneration Fund; and
- ii. **AGREED** to ringfence the allocation of £57,748.71 Community Regeneration Funding 2023/24 towards Nairn Harbour Street, former public toilet site redevelopment, and request that a full application for funds be considered at a future Committee.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday, 7 August 2023, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms T Collier
Mr D Louden

Mrs P Munro
Ms M Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager
Mr D Martin, Area Education & Learning Manager.
Mr I Moncrieff, Area Roads Operations Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Mr S Freireich, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr D Louden in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr A Rhind and Ms M Nolan.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Easter Ross Area Committee.

**4. Fire – Area Performance Summary Report
Smàladh – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/13/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- in response to concerns about a recent spate of deliberate fires, assurance was provided that this had abated following efforts by the local police officers and youth groups;
- the reduced number of road traffic collisions was welcomed, though it was acknowledged that due to the low baseline figures, the 3-yearly averages gave a better indication than the quarterly figures;
- concern was expressed at reports of trespassing and vandalism in the old pumphouse at the former Seabank Tank Farm and it was requested that further data on the associated fire risks be gathered and appropriate action taken if required;
- in response to numerous incidents of small fires being set in woods in Alness, some of which were dealt with by residents and therefore not reported to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Ms P Munro would email Mr Freireich to discuss how best to report these incidents. As some of the incidents were reported to the Police rather than to the SFRS, the Senior Ward Manager would make contact with the new local Inspector and local Youth Development Officers to ensure good information/intelligence sharing; and
- information was sought and provided on new policies in relation to call outs for single point detection systems. A link to information had been provided in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and **AGREED** the Senior Ward Manager support SFRS to make contact with the new local Inspector and local Youth Development Officers to ensure good information/intelligence sharing and other relevant matters.

**5. Inspection Report of Invergordon Academy by HMle
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Acadamaidh Inbhir Ghòrdain le Luchd-sgrùdaidh
Foghlaim na Banrigh (HMle)**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/14/23 by the Area Education & Learning Manager.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was hoped the action plan that resulted from the inspection, and the new Head Teacher starting in post, would bring much needed stability and continuity to the teaching staff. Some teaching shortages were a national challenge;
- subject choice was also affected by teacher shortages, however this would be addressed and attention was drawn to alternative and vocational opportunities that were available, including via the Highland Virtual Academy, and through working with Education and business partners; and
- assurance was sought and provided that progress with the action plans would be shared with parents via the parent council.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

**6. Winter Service Plan 2023/24
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2023/34**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/15/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the winter routes being on one plan was welcomed;
- it was important the public knew how to support the winter maintenance efforts, for example by ensuring local grit bins were filled in good time for winter;
- concern was expressed at the number of outstanding potholes on the road network in Easter Ross, which might be hidden by snow and cause damage to vehicles, and assurance was sought that potholes would be repaired before the onset of winter. Particular reference was made to the poor state of roads in some housing estates. A summary was provided of the revenue budget work programme with regard to road patching, which had been affected by the decision to focus on capital works, and investigation would be made into the possible use of a contractor to address the outstanding potholes. Members expressed gratitude to the road maintenance team for their work. It was also acknowledged that a decision had been made to focus resources for patching on higher speed roads; and
- Members expressed concern about the number of weeds growing in some urban areas, with particular reference to Invergordon and Tain, and while acknowledging the earlier decision to achieve budget savings in this area, it was hoped that something could be done to address the problem. In response to Members, the Area Roads Manager referred to the need for additional resources and for a strategic capital programme that facilitated improved planning, for Council resources and contractor availability.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 and **AGREED**:

- i. gratitude be expressed to the road maintenance team for their work;
- ii. to investigate the weed situation in various urban locations; and
- iii. to investigate whether it was possible to undertake additional pothole patching in the areas detailed during discussion.

7. Invergordon Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain

There had been circulated Report No ERA/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

- in relation to Invergordon Town Hall, the Invergordon Naval Museum and Heritage Centre's Community Asset Transfer consultation was due to close on 25 August 2023. Members were reminded that while the Town Hall remained in the ownership of the Common Good Fund, the Fund remained responsible for any essential maintenance to the building; and
- in relation to the Bouchardon Bust, the options appraisal had not yet been progressed due to staff vacancies. The history of the discovery and subsequent considerations about what to do with the Bust were summarised.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund; and
- ii. the update on current Invergordon Common Good issues

**8. Tain Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There is circulated Report No ERA/17/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Community and Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund.

**9. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the Ward Discretionary Awards approved since 1 April 2023.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and was **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 22 May 2023, which had been approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

The meeting ended at 11.45am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 8 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr J McGillivray

Mr R Gale

Mr H Morrison (remote)

Ms M Hutchison (remote)

Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager

Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager

Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector S Fitzpatrick, Police Scotland

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

Mr R Gale in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Sutherland County Committee.

**4. Police – Area Performance Summary
Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/13/23 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Chief Inspector and officers were commended for the work they undertook across Sutherland, particularly in supporting vulnerable people

with mental health issues, and at a time when there was pressure on Police Scotland's resources;

- an explanation was sought and provided on the percentages shown in the report in relation to detection rates;
- the potential for more enforcement action to be undertaken on the NC500 to tackle speeding. The Chief Inspector advised that there were resourcing issues around the ability to have dedicated patrolling on the route all year round. However, the route would continue to be monitored and feedback on hot spots or requests to target specific problem areas would be welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the detection rates for and wider issues around fraud, including electronic fraud, and noting that the vast majority were conducted from outwith the UK;
- clarification was sought and provided that the potential to install road signage as a deterrent to speeding on the A836 Balblair straight and to undertake speed surveys was the responsibility of the Council, and that Police Scotland were supportive of such measures;
- advice was sought and provided on the issues around volunteers undertaking speed surveys in the Dornoch/Embo area and the opportunity to learn from a volunteer initiative in Argyll; and
- Brora Community Council had raised an issue in relation to an offer by Police Scotland to have meetings in East Sutherland earlier in 2023 which it was understood had not taken place. The Chief Inspector confirmed that he would follow up on this matter.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

5. Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No SCC/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In discussion, a point was raised regarding the potential for the Council to promote its winter resilience scheme to the public with a view to increasing its uptake. It was confirmed that the opportunities in this regard would be raised with the Corporate Communications team.

Thereafter, an amendment to the Plan was proposed that the road from Lochinver Primary School, South, to Inverkirkaig Bridge, a distance of approximately 2.5miles/4km, be re-prioritised from the category "Other" to "Secondary", as defined in The Highland Council Community Services Winter Service Policy August 2018, paragraph 3.1, Network Hierarchy. This was on the basis that this was a school bus route for primary and high school pupils and currently 16 young people depended on the route to access their education.

The Chair advised that he was aware the proposed amendment would possibly have financial implications for which there was no provision within the available budget for Sutherland and therefore would require to be referred to the full Council for approval.

The Roads Operation Manager advised that adding a 'secondary' route to the Plan would have financial implications for the budget and there may also be resource implications in that area associated with the proposal, for example in terms of staffing levels and driver hours.

*Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 with an amendment, subject to approval at full Council, that the road from Lochinver Primary School, South, to Inverkirkaig Bridge, a distance of approximately 2.5miles/4km, be re-prioritised from the category "Other" to "Secondary", as defined in The Highland Council Community Services Winter Service Policy August 2018, paragraph 3.1, Network Hierarchy.

6. **Dornoch Business Improvement District Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/15/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- further clarity was provided on the BID levy that would be payable by businesses and the 12 charging bands that would apply;
- providing further context and background to the development of the BID proposal and the next phase. The Dornoch Area Community Interest Company and Ward Manager were thanked for their hard work in moving the BID forward;
- an explanation was sought and provided that if the result of the ballot of local businesses was to proceed with the BID proposal this would be binding on all businesses and they would be compelled to pay the levy. The levy would be collected through the Non Domestic Rates System by the Council and any defaults on payment would be pursued through its normal enforcement procedures; and
- further clarity was provided that for the BID proposal to be accepted by the Scottish Government a level of support had to be demonstrated and approximately 30% of businesses in Dornoch had indicated they were supportive of the proposal.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the proposals for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Dornoch; and
- ii. *** AGREED to RECOMMEND** to full Council that it supports the Dornoch BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 14 September 2023. This will be subject to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirming that Highland Council has no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID.

7. **Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/16/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

In discussion, reference was made to the excellent work being undertaken through the Fund, including the two major projects being progressed, and the benefits this work was delivering for Dornoch.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of Dornoch Common Good fund at the end of the first quarter FY 23/24;
- ii. **HOMOLOGATED** £13,163 of expenditure on essential repairs to Dornoch Beach car parks; and
- iii. **NOTED** the update on current Dornoch Common Good issues.

9. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications have been approved since 1 April 2023:

Lairg Community Council - Lairg Bird Hide upgrade	£2,000.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00
Farr Youth Development – High Life Highland - Day Trip to Durness	£240.00
The Sutherland Community Partnership - Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust - Kyle Feeds	£1,000.00
Lairg & District Community Initiative - Replace Flag Pole	£500.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications have been approved since 1 April 2023:

Clyne Heritage Society – Aultcraggie Roundhouses Archaeological Excavation	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club – Victorian Benches	£700.00
East Sutherland Camera Club – Highland Challenge 2023	£600.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00
Go Golspie - Caretaker Post	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club - Defib at Clubhouse	£1,641.96
The Sutherland Community Partnership - Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Dornoch Academy - Edinburgh Book Festival Literacy Trip	£1,175.00
The Embo Trust - Old School Reset	£600.00
HLH - Dornoch Youth Services Summer Activity Programme	£1,000.00

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 16 May 2023, which were approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

Additional Item PSA Hours in Sutherland

The Chair indicated that from that information, it would appear there had been little change in the number of hours, however that was contrary to the information that he had received from concerned parents. For example, the parents of Rogart Primary School had advised him that the number of PSA hours allocated to the school had dropped significantly in spite of an increase in demand.

He expressed concern that the algorithm that was used to determine the hours required in any particular school was flawed and as such was not addressing the level of need that existed.

Given this involved the most vulnerable children, the Chair proposed that the Committee calls upon the Council to review the PSA hours allocation to all schools and in particular to remote and rural schools, and that consultations be carried out with staff and parents to determine the actual level of PSA hours required to meet the requirements of all children who need that additional support.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to call upon the Council to review the PSA hours allocation to all schools in Sutherland in particular to remote and rural schools, and that consultations be carried out with staff and parents to determine the actual level of PSA hours required to meet the requirements of all children who need that additional support.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 8 August, 2023 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Ms S Fanet
Mr J C Grafton
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Saggars
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment
Mr G Kennedy, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure & Environment
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander (Highland West), Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Mr J Taylor, Youth Development Officer, High Life Highland
Ms M Barker, Youth Development Officer, (Fort William), High Life Highland
Ms R Carmichael, Youth Development Officer (Fort William), High Life Highland
Ms K Gillespie, Youth Development Officer (Kinlochleven), High Life Highland
Ms C Munro, Highland Youth Convener

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

Ms K Willis in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were none.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaìdh

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No LA/11/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, reference was made to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) new policy, whereby as of 1st July 2023, the Service will no longer respond to all unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS) activations and duty holders will be responsible for managing these activations. The Service would continue to respond to life risk and set criteria ensuring that public safety is maintained.

As a result of this new policy there had been a reduction in the number of calls that Stations, mainly in urban areas, required to attend. However, in response to a concern about the viability of stations in remote rural areas, there was little impact in the number of callouts as a result of this policy for stations covering remote rural areas and no Stations were being looked at for closure at this time. It was being considered as to whether the remote rural station model could be used to support the Scottish Ambulance Service with medical responses such as cardiac arrest, slips, trips and falls events. This would require negotiation with the trade unions, senior management team and Scottish Government. The only impact on Stations was where savings required to be made in the service delivery model programme and the on call may be reviewed in the future.

Continuing, a number of Local Authorities, including the Highland Council, were opposed to the UFAS policy. Under the Fire Scotland Act 2005, it was the responsibility of the duty holder that they were responsible for managing fire safety within the premises. This policy and its implications had been considered for a number of years before being implemented. If it was found that there was an enhanced risk in certain areas, this could be reviewed, with a view to moving back to a response model requiring attendance to a UFAS.

In response to a query regarding the Spean Bridge Station appliance, it was acknowledged that while the appliance was fit for purpose, it was old and did need changed. Community Response Stations, such as Spean Bridge, in Highland had all been reviewed in relation to the appliance type they require. A range of appliance models were to be procured to ensure stations had the appliances that were fit for purpose.

In relation to initiatives to reduce road traffic collisions, particularly where foreign tourists were concerned, rental companies had been encouraged to put stickers in their vehicles alerting drivers to drive on the left and these messages were highlighted in a number of foreign languages. Similar messages were being targeted at campervan rentals. This was both a local and national problem and efforts were being made to try and address it. Better land maintenance around laybys along the A82 in order to encourage drivers to stop and let queues clear would also be considered.

In relation to preventing wildfires an undertaking was given to engage with the Highland Council Ranger Service on this issue.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance report.

5. High Life Highland Youth Work in Lochaber

There was circulated Report No. LA/12/23 by the Area Youth Officer, High Life Highland. Officers of the Youth Development Service were in attendance and provided an update about some of the projects that have been delivered by High Life Highland's Youth Service in Lochaber since April 2021 in each of the four Associated School Groups areas. The Highland Youth Convenor also provided an update of her year in post.

There then followed a question and answer session and some of the points raised were as follows:-

- anti social behaviour by young people in Fort William town centre. This had been an ongoing issue for some months and very little could be done to address it. The Police were called to incidents but sometimes they were too busy or did not have enough Officers to attend. There was ongoing work with the group of young people involved, however, Youth Development Officers had limited time to be in the Town centre to carry out this engagement;
- the Youth Services hard work in difficult conditions was acknowledged;
- the Youth Service had been contacted about being involved in the Scottish Rural & Islands Youth Parliament 2023 to be held in Fort William in November, 2023;
- it was acknowledged that more funding for youth services was needed and in particular, significant investment was required in resources for public sector Partners, such as the Police and Social Services, to work with families of young people
- in order to prevent suicides of young people, a crises place of safety in Fort William for them was required, where all Services could undertake intensive work with young people who were a suicide risk;
- there had been significant reductions to NHS expectant mothers care. If parents are supported at an early stage by agencies they then know where to go for help. There was not enough support in the town for parents who were having difficulties in dealing with their children. It took a community with tolerance to raise a child; and
- discussion on the issues raised at the meeting would continue at a future Area Business meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and presentations made by Area Youth Officer, Highland Youth Convenor and Youth Development Officers and **AGREED** to:-

- i. advocate for and work alongside young people, support them through community-based activities and to participate democratically in matters affecting them;
- ii. provide ongoing support of the Transport Initiative in Ardnamurchan; and
- iii. provide ongoing support to meet the demands of Youth Work in Fort William.

6. Lochaber Area Roads Winter Service Plan 2023/24 Plana Seirbheis Rathaidean Geamhraidh Sgìre Loch Abar 2023/24

There was circulated Report No. LA/13/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment which detailed the 2023/24 Winter Service Plan for Lochaber Area.

In discussion, it was advised that that the route between Kilchoan and the lighthouse was down as a route to be gritted in the Plan, but this would be checked and confirmed with Councillor A Macdonald given a concern locally that this road was not being treated.

It was advised that in extreme weather primary routes would be the priority for treatment and thereafter other routes would be treated when there was time and resources to do so. If there was a secondary route that was deemed essential to keep clear then resources would be diverted to this route. To help deal with exceptional prolonged snowfall situations, local contractors are available who can supply equipment and operators to assist in clearing deep snow at short notice. Community self help was also encouraged aimed at supporting winter maintenance locally.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for the Lochaber Area.

**7. Ward Discretionary Budget
Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2023/24.

Ward 11

HLH Archive Centre – contribution to travelling exhibition costs Tir nan Og - £750

Lochaber Wheeled sports society – for purchase of biked & helmets - £1000

Ward 21

Kinlochleven Primary School Council – School trip - £250

South Lochaber Community Association – Contribution to Bus repairs - £1750

Lochaber wheeled sports society – for purchase of bikes & helmets - £1000

**8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 16 May, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 29 June, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday 10 August 2023** at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr B Boyd
Mr R Bremer (Remote)
Mr I Brown
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair
Mr L Fraser
Mr A Graham
Mr S Kennedy (substitute)

Mrs I Mackenzie
Mr R Mackintosh
Ms A MacLean
Mrs B McAllister
Mr C Munro (Remote)
Mr A Rhind
Mr R Stewart (Remote)

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Finlayson (Remote)
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)

Mr T MacLennan (Remote)

Also in Attendance:

Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative
Mr A Dick, Tenant Representative

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning and Estate Strategy
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead - Housing Investment/Building Maintenance
Mr J Henderson, Policy Assistant - Empty Homes & PRS Liaison, Housing and Property
Ms H Cameron, Housing Development Officer, Infrastructure and Environment
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Committee expressed their appreciation to Mr D Goldie for all his excellent work over the years and wished him well in his retirement.

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of J McEwan, Mrs M Paterson and Mr A Sinclair.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Housing and Property Committee.

**4. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha**

An additional good news event was highlighted that a new £16m primary school at Ness-Side, Inverness had been completed during the summer holidays. In this regard, it was requested that an opening event be organised to celebrate this important achievement for the Highland Council and local community.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the good news as circulated.

**5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget: Final Outturn
2022/23 and Monitoring Statement to 30 June 2023
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais agus Buidseat Neo-Theachd-a-
steach Taigheadais: Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2022/23 agus Aithris
Sgrùdaidh gu 30 Ògmhios 2023**

There had been circulated Report No HP/12/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

- concern at the condition of some general amenity areas in housing estates as a consequence of the suspension of non-essential repairs and separately the Council's policy not to use glyphosate weedkiller with no decision on a substitute. The ECO Housing & Property confirmed that he and the appropriate officers would undertake site visits with local Members to any areas of specific concern;
- noting that responsibility for ensuring common areas were maintained to the required standards rested with the ECO Housing & Property. The ECO explained that discussions were being progressed at a senior level with the ECO Communities and Place and other officers on a strategic approach to common grounds maintenance including new housing developments;
- it would have been helpful for Members to be provided with more clarity in the report on the position of the reserves at the end of the financial year 2022/23;

- further clarity was sought and provided on the reasons for the significant increase in the variance on repairs and maintenance between the end of Quarter 3 and the outturn position;
- further details were sought and provided on the reasons for the underspend shown on the 'Supporting People' budget;
- the rent levels set for the current year had sought to protect tenants from the cost of living crisis. It had been acknowledged there would be consequences for reserves and non-essential repairs, and that difficult decisions may have to be made on rent levels for next year;
- the balance the Service sought to achieve in terms of using inhouse services and external contractors taking account of capacity issues, staffing costs and the specific trades, skillsets and specialist support required, This matter was regularly reviewed by officers and considered in the workforce planning reports brought to Committee;
- in regard to the above, discussions would be held with Members as to the scope of the proposed revised trades framework and the allocation of works to external contractors;
- noting that officers would investigate the specific constituency matters raised by Mrs B McAllister and confirming the Council's policy on gas appliances;
- the potential for Members and tenant representatives to have an input into the tenant satisfaction survey prior to circulation. Mrs L Richardson, Tenant's Representative, advised there was a high level of collaboration between the tenant representative bodies and the Housing Team through a number of forums, including on rents and co-designing the tenant survey. A main challenge was getting more tenants to become actively involved in this process; and
- the challenges the Council faced in terms of the ambiguities around the ownership of land and progress being made through the Corporate landlord model on this issue.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account 2022/2023;
- ii. **APPROVED** the drawdown of £3.965m from the Housing Revenue Account reserves to ensure a balanced budget for 2022/2023; and
- iii. **NOTED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account 2023/2024 for the period to 30 June 2023.

6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring: Outturn Report for 2022/23 and Quarter 1 Monitoring Report to 30 June 2023 PP.14-20
Sgrùdadh Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Aithisg Fìor Shuidheachaidh airson 2022/23 agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteal 1 gu 30 Ògmhios 2023

There had been circulated Report No HP/13/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that Members would be provided with details of the average cost per unit of new Council house builds in Highland;
- appreciation was expressed at the significant investment in new Council houses across the Highlands;
- further information was sought and provided on the significant overspend on the budget in 2022/23 associated with the one-off individual purchase scheme. A financial model was used to ensure these purchases were self-financing and had a positive impact on the overarching five year Programme. There was recognition within the Scottish Government's grant system of the need to undertake works to some properties prior to let and this was also reflected in the price the Council was willing to pay for these properties; and
- Members be provided with a briefing on the HRA Capital Programme including the repairs and management side. The Chair advised that she had been having discussions in relation to the establishment of a working group to consider these issues.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2022/23; and
- APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2023/2024 for the period to 30 June 2023.

7. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Budget: Final Outturn for 2022/23 and Monitoring Statement to 30 June 2023
Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Sheirbheisean Seilbh & Ghoireasan: Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach airson 2022/23 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh gu 30 Ògmhios 2023

There had been circulated Report No HP/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- final position for the 2022/23 financial year;
- position for the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, and the estimated year-end position; and
- progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery.

8. Property Capital Monitoring Statement and Progress Update
Aithris Sgrùdaidh Calpa Seilbhe agus Cunntas às Ùr air Adhartas

There had been circulated Report No HP/15/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In relation to paragraph 5.6 of the report, Members were provided with further information on the reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete issues at Charleston Academy and Nairn Academy. Further updates for parents and carers on the works were being drafted and both Schools would open on schedule for the new term with works continuing thereafter.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- more detailed information be made available to Ward 12 and 13 Members and a briefing offered to the parent council and staff in relation to the issues at Charleston Academy. The issues with the concrete added to the urgency and case for investment in what was a substantial school estate that incorporated Kinmylies Primary School;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the building condition surveys being undertaken. It was confirmed that summary versions could be provided for local Members in the Black Isle and Cromarty Firth wards;
- concern that Duthac House, Tain was falling into a state of disrepair in its entirety. It was confirmed that officers would attend a Ward Business Meeting to discuss with local Members the plans for the building going forward;
- in relation to St Clement's School, Dingwall, an update date was provided on progress with the land purchase and design work. The Interim Chief Executive had confirmed there were to be no further stakeholder meetings for these types of major projects until the position was clearer with the LEIP funding and pending the review of the Council's Capital Programme;
- confirmation was sought and provided that an update would be provided to Mrs A Maclean on boiler replacements in her ward;
- the Service be congratulated on securing funding for the Gypsy/Traveller site at Longman Park, Inverness and reference to the significant improvements this would deliver; and
- an update was sought and provided on the potential relocation of staff from the Merkinch Family Centre, and that officers would report back to local Members in the near future on the plans for the building.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. final position for the 2022/23 financial year;
- ii. position at the end of the first quarter of the 2023/24 financial year, and the estimated year-end position;
- iii. progress made with the projects referred to in this report, and the actions taken and revised programme dates for the new Nairn Academy building; and
- iv. actions taken following the structural surveys and assessments carried out during the summer holiday period at Charleston Academy and Nairn Academy, and that a verbal update will be provided at the next meeting of this Committee.

9. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No HP/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- tenants continued to face a cost of living crisis and the position with rent arrears would have been worse if a higher rent increase for the current year had been agreed;
- delivering a greater service involved increased cost and the current trends in national inflation and the position with the reserves would influence the decision on rent levels for 2024/25. The level of discussion that would be

required with Members and tenants could not be underestimated given the potential impacts of that decision;

- an explanation was sought and provided that the Service aimed to achieve a balance in the recovery of rent arrears taking into account the complexities of the benefits system. The potential to review the system for generating letters for technical rent arrears would be referred to the Service's Policy Team;
- debt recovery activities aimed to be reasonable and proportionate to the amount outstanding, acknowledging the costs involved and reflecting the personal circumstances of tenants. The Service worked closely with the NHS and tenants who were in hospital/long term care on a case by case basis and numbers could be provided to Members if required;
- the Service's performance on the time to undertake repairs compared well to other local authorities and staff be commended on this achievement;
- the potential for a report to be brought forward to Members on the impact of the cost of living crisis on the number of homeless presentations. It was confirmed this matter would be raised with the Service Lead;
- in relation to the number of homeless presentations from outwith Highland, it was confirmed this information was not currently available. The position was being monitored and it was hoped details could be provided to Members in future; and
- significant additional demand was being experienced for housing of all tenures and particularly in regard to homeless presentations. The Chair and ECO Housing & Property were to meet with the Scottish Minister for Housing to discuss this from a national strategic perspective and to get a steer on addressing the complexities around these challenges.

Mrs L Richardson, Tenant Representative, reported on tenant liaison nationally with the Scottish Housing Regulator on the impact of the cost of living crisis on tenants. Fuel and food costs had been identified in tenant surveys as the two main significant reasons for rent arrears. The point was made to the Regulator that the focus should be on lowering these and other household bills rather than rent levels which was the least of tenants monthly costings .

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance during the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

10. Service Performance Monitoring Report - Financial Year 2022/2023 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Coileanaidh na Seirbheis – Bliadhna Ionmhais 2022/2023

There had been circulated Report No HP/17/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it was queried what type of freedom of information topics were requested from the Housing Service;
- the percentage of housing dwellings that were energy efficient was up to 77.3%. It was queried how many tenants actually engaged their heating despite the property being classed as energy efficient. It was felt that some

- tenants might not be able to afford to run their heating and, in this regard, it was queried if this question formed part of the tenant questionnaire;
- Members would welcome discussions at Area Committee level in terms of the particular housing stock in their area, the type of strategic approach which would best fit their area and feedback into the overall strategic approach, including rent increases and Housing investment. In this regard it was suggested that Areas with comparable housing stock levels meet together with Council Officers as a more efficient use of time and resource;
 - further information was requested to review the Housing & Property Service sickness statistics, in terms of a rolling history overview, and compare this against previous quarters to provide better context of the measurement process;
 - Members felt that Housing & Property's complaints resolution performance reflected well on the Council's overall performance, especially as the number of complaints accounts concerning Housing and Property accounted for around half of all complaints received by the Council; and
 - it was confirmed that the missing data in section 6 Service Plan Progress of the report would be populated in future reports.

The Committee **NOTED** the Service's performance information.

11. Housing and Property Service Plan 2023-2024 Plana Seirbheis Taigheadais is Seilbhe 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No HP/18/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members felt that the delivery of Service Plans should be discussed at Area Committees to take into consideration complexities and considerations within each local area;
- the Dingwall office rationalisation project had been ongoing for some time and Members requested that the momentum and urgency should continue. In this regard it was confirmed that several properties were still not ready for sale or rent. An update was requested from Officers when the properties would be ready for market, for lease or for community asset transfer;
- disappointment was expressed that local businesses and shops in Dingwall Highstreet had to undertake cleaning and weeding of the street as Council services no longer undertook these works. In this regard further disappointment was expressed that some Council owned buildings in the High Street appeared unkempt with unclean windows and were not viewed as a good neighbour to the surrounding businesses
- regarding independent living adaptations, whilst the Council's performance was 38.6 days which was below the target of 50 days, concern was raised that there did not appear to be continuous improvement to stretch performance by the Council. In this regard, it was also felt that the provision of Homeless accommodation, whilst below the Scottish average should be improved upon even from a cost control perspective;
- concern was raised regarding the new Broadford primary school timescale as the planning application had been pushed back until 2024, especially as a

condition of the Leap 2 funding was that the building be completed by December 2024 and there didn't appear to be room for further slippage. In this regard, clarification was sought on how confident the Council was in meeting the deadline; and

- it was questioned if biomass heating systems carried the risk of not being true net zero, and the Councils target could therefore be at risk.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Service Plan for 2023/24.

The meeting ended at 2.20pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 14 August, 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr G Smith, Service Lead – Infrastructure & Environment
Mr G Macdonald, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:-

Mr T Lusink, Community Development Officer, Carbon Neutral Islands Project – Raasay
Ms R MacInnes, Community Development Officer, Carbon Neutral Islands Project - Raasay

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

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Transparency Statement: Item 8 – Mr C Munro

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

**4. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 22 May and 26 June, 2023 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 29 June, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

**5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus
Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/16/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland. The Senior Officer was unable to attend the meeting and Members were asked to consider the report and answers to any questions they had would be provided to Members after the meeting.

The following comments/questions were raised by Members:-

- in terms of Station availability, the data suggested that availability was good throughout the year but comments from local crews would say otherwise and clarity was sought on how accurate the Station availability data was;
- the Senior Officer be invited to an Area Business Meeting to give an update on any progress on the relocation of the Portree Station;
- in terms of the proposal to try and recommence flights from Broadford would this give more leverage to have a full time Station on Skye;
- there was a noticeable reduction of crew in Skye/Raasay over the last few years and perhaps a full time station providing careers in the Service would attract more people to join the Service. It was acknowledged that the Service was trying hard to recruit staff in the area;
- overall it was a positive report and particularly that the number of instances requiring a response was low. However, this did not negate the need to have good Station availability that was able to respond whenever it was needed; and
- the numbers of road traffic collisions (RTCs) in July and August, 2023 was sought. Also, Police Scotland would be asked to include in their next Performance Report to the Committee the number of RTCs that they had attended on Skye/Raasay in 2023.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and that responses to questions raised at the meeting would be provided to Members following the meeting and should be included in the next Performance Report to Committee so that answers were a matter of public record.

**6. Infrastructure for Isle of Skye and Isle of Raasay
Bun-structair airson an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair**

There was a presentation by the Service Lead, Infrastructure providing an update on key infrastructure for the Isle of Skye and Isle of Raasay. Updates were provided in relation to the Uig Ferry Terminal; Portree Link Road; Portree Harbour; Portree Cemetery Extension and the Small vessel replacement Programme for Sconser/Raasay.

Following the presentation, some of the main comments raised were as follows:-

- the works at Uig Ferry Terminal were progressing well and the work of both Council Officers and the private contractor, RJ Macleod on the project was commended. The community's forbearance during the construction period was acknowledged and it was hoped that there would be understanding from the public that the closure of the terminal at the end of the year to

allow a major stage on the project to be completed was necessary. Once completed the public would have a much improved and modern facility;

- in relation to the Uig Ferry terminal building, the contract had been re-tendered and the current completion date for the building was November, 2024. The Harbour works were due to be completed by August, 2024. In terms of the old terminal structure which would form part of the new terminal, it was queried if there were any concerns about the state of the old structure and that it would not compromise the new structure in any way;
- in terms of the Portree Link road, this would provide many advantages for the town, such as an alternative route for traffic rather than going through the centre of Portree. The land issues were nearly all complete, with only some decrofting of portions of land still to be approved and as there had not been any objections from the Crofters Commission to the new road, approval was expected;
- any investment in Portree Harbour was long overdue and would be welcomed by the community, particularly the businesses operating at the Harbour. Work on the programme to undertake repairs at the Harbour would commence once funding was confirmed;
- it was disappointing that progress was still required on the Portree Cemetery extension. The delay had resulted in costs being incurred by the Council and it was hoped that work on the extension could start soon. It was acknowledged that other communities were looking for cemetery extensions, such as Broadford, Skeabost and Dunvegan and work was ongoing on necessary cemetery extensions across Highland; and
- it was positive news that a new electric powered ferry was being considered for the Sconser to Raasay route.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation on key infrastructure for the Isle of Skye and Isle of Raasay.

**7. Isle of Raasay Carbon Neutral Island – Community Climate Action Plan
Eilean Ratharsair: Eilean Neodrach a thaobh Carboin – Plana-gnìomha
Gnàth-shìde Coimhearsnachd**

There was a presentation by Community Development Officers of the Carbon Neutral Islands Project on the Community Climate Action Plan; what the Carbon Neutral Island Project was; what that means for the Isle of Raasay; the work that had been done so far and what the project hopes to do going forward. The Isle of Raasay was one of six Islands that had been chosen for the Scottish Government's Carbon Neutral Islands project, to enable work so that Raasay and the other Islands could go carbon neutral by 2040, ahead of the rest of Scotland. The aim was to demonstrate the low carbon energy potential of Scotland's Islands as hubs of innovation of renewable energy and climate change resilience, whilst positively impacting on Island economies, population retention, growth and Islands based jobs.

Following the presentation, the main points raised in discussion were as follows:-

- the presentation highlighted the many challenges facing Raasay, which was replicated across many communities across Skye and Highlands;

- there was £160k of capital funding from the Scottish Government for the project this year and further funding would not be known until next year. Other sources of funding were continually being looked at so as not to be too reliant on Government funding. The Government funding would hopefully act as leverage to secure match funding from other sources;
- the partnership with Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association would hopefully enhance the housing stock across Raasay and Skye and also bring empty homes back into use. There was a significant challenge in providing energy efficient housing in order to meet net zero carbon neutral targets;
- the project fitted well with the Skye and Raasay Futures programme and its ambitions for the area;
- the majority of land on Raasay was Government owned with also Forestry Commission, Community and private crofts ownership. There should be potential to undertake projects given most of the land was Government owned;
- with the potential of an electric powdered ferry for the Sconser to Raasay route Calmac and CMAL had been contacted with the idea of supplying the electric power for the ferry through community renewable energy;
- it was encouraging that there had been consultation, audits and plans in place to meet the aims of the project; and
- work on repairs to the Community Hall was a priority for the Island and any financial support toward this would be very welcomed.

The Chair thanked the representatives from the Carbon Neutral Islands Project for their informative presentation, the impressive work that was being undertaken on Raasay, congratulations on the work undertaken so far and looked forward to a further update at a future meeting. Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation on the Community Climate Action Plan.

8. Community Regeneration Fund – Project Reports Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd – Aithisgean Pròiseict

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Trustee of a Trust that had previously received community regeneration funding. However, as this item was for information, Mr Munro wished to record a connection to the item but having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Ahead of the reopening of the Community Regeneration Fund, the Project Officer Community Regeneration, presented an update on projects supported by Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) in 2019-2023 on the Isle of Skye and Raasay. An update was also provided on the funds available in the upcoming round of funding.

Following the presentation, the following main points were raised:-

- The presentation showed the positive work happening across Skye and Raasay which was very encouraging. The CRF had made a huge difference to many communities in the area. The partnership working between Members and the CRF team was acknowledged

- 2 CRF projects from round 1 CRF had not yet commenced and it was requested that an update on these be provided at a future Area Business meeting. It was highlighted that these projects were being monitored by the CRF team, one of which had a shortfall in funding and the other was looking at match funding from various external sources.
- The match funding for some projects that had been achieved because of CRF was very positive and showed what could be achieved locally;
- The next round of CRF and the projects that would come forward for funding was welcomed. These projects would benefit the whole community in the area.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation on the Community Regeneration Fund projects and that an update would be provided at a future Area Business Meeting on 2 projects that had not yet commenced.

**9. Isle of Skye and Raasay Winter Maintenance Plan 2023/24
Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair
2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. SR/17/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment, which detailed the 2023/24 Winter Service Plan for Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

In particular, it was noted that the additional maps appended to the report would provide good information to the public on the primary, secondary routes and priorities for winter maintenance. Offering a community resilience scheme would provide a valuable additional winter maintenance resource in communities.

Continuing, the Route 10 Map did not show the Marishader to the Health Centre road as a secondary route and this would be corrected. Also, information would be provided to Councillor C Munro on why the Glenconon road was not a secondary route. It was also requested that a letter be sent to Bear Scotland seeking reassurance that Bear will fulfil their contractual obligation to provide winter maintenance on footpaths beside trunk roads in Portree, Broadford and Uig.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24, subject to the Route 10 Map being corrected to show the Marishader to the Health Centre road as a secondary route;
- AGREED** that a letter be sent to Bear Scotland seeking reassurance that Bear will fulfil their contractual obligation to provide winter maintenance on footpaths beside trunk roads in Portree, Broadford and Uig; and
- NOTED** that information would be provided to Councillor C Munro on why the Glenconon road was not a secondary route.

**10. Ward Discretionary Budget
Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2023/24:-

Highlife Highland Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre £500

Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association (2) £500
Skye Youth Pipe Band £1,000
Waternish Community Garden £500
Portree & Braes Community Trust £1,500
New Pads for Tigh na Sgìre Defibrillator £55

The meeting ended at 12.33 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on 14 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs A MacLean

Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Business

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager

Mr I Moncrieff, Area Roads Operations Manager

Mr B Cameron, Service Lead (Housing Policy & Performance), Housing and Property

Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Inspector R Ross, Area Inspector, Police Scotland

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr S Kennedy.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no Declarations of Interests/Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaìdh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

4. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No DSA/11/23 dated 10 August 2023 by the Area Commander, Police Scotland. Key points were highlighted and Members' attention was drawn to performance data with comparisons made to previous years. However, a note of caution was expressed that it would take

some time before accurate comparisons could be made as a result of the COVID pandemic.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Chair was pleased to report that Rob Shepherd, the new Highland and Islands Divisional Commander, was to brief all Members on 23 August 2023. Many issues affecting Police Scotland could only be addressed nationally so questions for Mr Shepherd were being sought in advance;
- the budget cuts in Police Scotland affected everyone;
- a particular area in Dingwall had been a source of complaints about groups of people meeting but, due to the intervention of Police Scotland, this problem had reduced and Members expressed their appreciation for this;
- where there was an increased police presence in specific areas, Local Members should be informed so that they were in a position to respond to any queries;
- concern was expressed as to what might happen in the Autumn and Winter and it was important Police Scotland continued to work with partners to protect the most vulnerable;
- anti-social behaviour had seen a slight increase and information was sought as to what areas were affected. It was also important to highlight that instances could be reported to Crimestoppers, the role of which was outlined;
- in response to a query it was explained that there was no specific time period before a missing person could be reported. Each instance was considered in the context of their circumstances;
- there was an on-going review of the Police estate and Dingwall Police Station would be included as part of that;
- it was disappointing that the Driving Ambition initiative was not part of Operation CEDAR;
- although there had not been an increase, cuckooing was still taking place, and anyone with concerns should approach Police Scotland, Social Work Services and the Harm Prevention Officer;
- Rural Watch was important as a number of farms had had property stolen; and
- Inspector Ross was invited to the next Ward Business Meeting to discuss issues in more detail.

The Chair having emphasised the full support of Highland Council for Police Scotland, the Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

5. Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since last meeting
larrtasán buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàrd Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shìophort air an aontachadh bhon choinneimh mu dheireadh

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since its last meeting:-

- i. Dingwall Community Development Company – Study into Creation of Allotments in Dingwall - £100
- ii. Maryburgh Community Council – Maryburgh in Bloom Project - £400
- iii. The Neil Gunn Trust – Neil Gunn Writing Competition 2023 - £650
- iv. Dingwall Community Council – Dingwall in Bloom Project - £1,500
- v. Black Isle Farmers' Society – Black Isle Show 2023 - £600
- vi. Ross County Foundation – public access defibrillator - £787
- vii. The Muir of Ord Hub – room hire for accessible streets project - £120

In this regard, it was questioned when the Neil Gunn Writing Competition was to take place.

**6. Dingwall Common Good Fund – 2023/24 Quarter One Monitoring Report
Maoin Math Choitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil a h-Aon 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/12/23 dated 25 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer - Communities and Place/Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

The Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund as shown in 2023/24 Quarter One Monitoring Statement.

**7. Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Report
Aithisg Urras Foghlaim Rois is Chromba**

The Committee **NOTED** that this report had already been discussed at the Committee's last meeting on 22 May 2023.

**8. Winter Service Plan for 2023/24
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/14/23 dated 25 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- although the Winter Service Plan was broadly in line with last year's, more houses had been built resulting in a greater requirement for gritting;
- Members sought information surrounding the number of staff, their age profile and what succession planning was in place;
- a map detailing where grit bins were located was requested;
- information was sought as to where vehicles and plant were located;
- ideally plant should be fully utilised but this was not always achievable;
- constituents had also raised concerns regarding flooding and problems after heavy rainfall and there needed to be a communication strategy in place to ensure that they were kept informed about progress;
- Members asked to be kept informed when the Pothole Pro was to be used in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward;

- the resurfacing of Jubilee Park Road was commended and had made a huge difference, not just to the football stadium but to the Caravan Park as well;
- calls were made for additional resources to be allocated to the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward given the level of traffic in Dingwall;
- when potholes reached a certain point, they could no longer be patched and needed to be included in the Capital Programme; and
- Local Members wished to take time to view all the roads to enable a comparison to be made and to then prioritise which roads needed attention first.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24; and
- ii. **AGREED** a grit bin map be circulated to the Committee.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 22 May 2023 which were approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 15 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin
Ms L Johnston
Ms M MacCallum

In attendance:

Mr B Cameron, Interim Head of Housing and Building Maintenance
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manger
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager (North)
Mr M Greig, Ward Manager (Inverness)
Mr D Martin, Area Education & Learning Manager
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Comms & Engagement Officer
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer
Ms J Wileman, Assistant Ward Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

R Ross, Police Scotland
P Young, SFRS

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

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

Business

The Committee expressed their appreciation to Ms Diane Agnew, former Ward Manager for her hard work preparing the Common Good Fund reports and for all her excellent work over the years and wished her well in her retirement.

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Recess Powers

Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Black Isle Committee.

4. Police – Area Performance Report Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No BI/7/23 dated 10 August 2023 by the Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members thanked Mr R Ross for the Police report, including the visual graphs;
- Members were informed that Chief Inspector Scott Macdonald had retired and Stuart Fitzpatrick had been appointed as Acting Chief Inspector in the interim;
- it was queried if the Police felt the rollout of 20mph zones across Highland had improved driver behaviour and reduce speeding offences;
- it was disappointed and saddening to note the increase in drink and drug driving offences;
- reassurance was sought on how break-ins would be dealt with moving forward taking into consideration the reduction of Police resources in the Black Isle;
- in terms of missing persons, it was queried how many missing adults had conditions such as dementia or if it was a case of persons simply not wanting to be found;
- regarding sexual offenses, it was queried what grades of offenses were encompassed within the overall statistics for Black Isle;
- as there had been an increase in stalking cases, information was sought, and provided, on what proactive steps persons could take to protect themselves and what action to take. In this regard, the Police definition of stalking was requested;
- it was queried if the Police had a strategic approach towards certain hotspot areas of reported anti-social behaviour;
- information was sought, and provided, on whether the CEDAR approach was engaged only after persons had committed an offense;
- it was queried how prevalent knife crime and county lines were on the Black Isle; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the PREVENT strategy was specific to counter-terrorism and would not include other issues such as misogyny. In this regard, misogyny would be included under a Police Scotland strategy in relation to violence against women and girls.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

5. Black Isle Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since 31 January 2023 Iarrtasan Buidseit fo Ùghdarras Uàird an Eilein Duibh air an Aontachadh bho 31 Faoilleach 2023

The Committee **NOTED**;

i. that the following Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 31 January 2023:-

- Culbokie Primary School - Play and Enquiry in Learning - £1,500
- Culbokie Community Trust Ltd - Health & Safety work on Culbokie Green - £1,500
- Ferintosh CC - Community Resilience - Maintenance of Landscaped Areas beside B9169 in heart of Culbokie IR Amenities - £250
- Cromarty Community Development Trust - Cromarty Campsite – £2,998
- Fortrose Academy Parent Council - Duke of Edinburgh Awards Expedition - £1,000
- Chanonry Sailing Club SCIO - Quest to Develop: Purchase of two RS Quest Sailing Dinghies - £500
- Knockbain Community Council - North Kessock Underpass Community Artwork & Youth Competition - £2,300
- Highland Rugby Club - Under 16 Legacy Tour to Italy in October 2023 - Multi Ward - Lead Officer Mark Greig - £400
- First Scottish Searching Services - Legal Report Munloch Tennis Court - £76

and;

ii. that the funding for the discretionary budget for the Ward would now only accept applications £1000 or under due to the limited remaining funds.

**6. Black Isle HRA Capital Programme Update and 2023-27 Programme
Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais an Eilein Duibh agus Prògram 2023–27**

There had been circulated Report No BI/8/23 dated 3 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members thanked officers for the report and for their efforts in taking forward energy efficiency improvements to the Black Isle housing stock as keeping tenants warm was a major concern. Thanks were also expressed for assisting tenants with aids and adaptations;
- it was confirmed that the Black Isle Capital Programme would take a fabric first approach and include the upgrading of doors and windows. In this regard, the specific detail of the programme would be shared with Members at a Ward Business Meeting in due course;
- Members and officers acknowledged that costs within the construction industry had increased and this would impact on the HRA Capital Programme. Officers reassured Members that they would take efforts to deliver improvements as efficiently as possible and seek external funding where available to support the HRA investment; and
- it was hoped that an updated HRA Capital Programme would be submitted to the Housing and Property Committee within this financial year.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Black Isle at 6.6 paragraph of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Black Isle 2023-27 as set out in appendix 1 of the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the housing revenue account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future local committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property committee.

**7. Winter Service Plan for 2023/24
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No BI/9/23 dated 24 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- as difficult to access grit bins were filled earlier in the season, it was queried if any were recorded as being empty or requiring to be topped up or would it take place on a request only basis;
- appreciation was conveyed to the roads team working out of Greenhill depot for their hard work despite limited resources and being a compact team;
- information was sought, and provided, why the Service hired a professional weather forecast provider;
- Members felt that 6 gritters and 5 footpath tractors were insufficient for the size geographical area being covered; and
- it was queried if the Roads Section had any staff vacancies which required to be backfilled at present.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24.

**8. Common Good Funds
Maoin Maith Choitcinn**

**a. Cromarty Common Good Fund – Quarter One Monitoring Report
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil a h-Aon**

There had been circulated joint Report No BI/10/23 dated 25 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it had been established that the Cromarty Victoria Hall was not part of the Common Good Register and, as a result, clarification was sought on what this change would mean for the Hall, the Community Council and the Common Good Fund moving forward. In this regard, it was queried if the

local community could contest the decision or if the decision was viewed as non-negotiable; and

- an update was requested on East Hall, Cromarty as the Hall continued to be unused and the building appeared to be in decline.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter One Monitoring Statement.

b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund – Quarter One Monitoring Report
Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil a h-Aon

There had been circulated Joint Report No BI/11/23 dated 25 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officers Communities and Place and Resources and Finance.

Members discussed 5.2 paragraph of the report concerning whether the high interest rates were being passed onto savings and investments to gain more interest payments. In this regard it was confirmed that an accountant from Corporate Finance would review the query and update Members in due course.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter One Monitoring Statement; and
- AGREED** that information would be sought from the Corporate Finance team regarding 5.2 paragraph of the report if high interest rates would be passed onto savings and investments to gain increased interest payments.

9. Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Report
Aithisg Urras Foghlaim Rois & Chromba

There had been circulated Report No BI/12/23 dated 22 May 2023 by the Education & Learning Manager.

The award payments from The Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Scheme were welcomed. It was confirmed that whilst there was no formal request for feedback on the awards, some individuals had made contact to communicate their personal appreciation on receiving an award.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report; and
- AGREED** to give delegated authority to the Area Education & Learning Manager to explore options to improve investment income.

10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle Committee held on 31 January 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

The meeting ended at 11:40 am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 17 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Ms J McEwan
Ms S Atkin (substitute)	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr M Baird	Ms L Niven
Mr I Brown	Mr A Rhind
Mr M Cameron	Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie (Remote)
Mr P Logue	Mr R Stewart
Mr W MacKay (Remote)	Ms K Willis (Remote)
Mr T MacLennan (substitute) (Remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt (Remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Ms A MacLean
Mr A Christie (Remote)	Mr D Macpherson (Remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mr D Millar
Ms J Hendry (Remote)	Mr C Munro (Remote)
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive
 Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration
 Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager
 Ms N Wallace, Service Lead, Environment, Development and Active Travel
 Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)
 Mr R Campbell, Service Lead, Capital Planning and Estate Strategy
 Mr D Chisholm, Tourism & Inward Investment Team Leader
 Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader
 Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance
 Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr M Green and Mr R Jones.

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

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

Item 18: Mr H Morrison and Mrs T Robertson

and Transparency Statements:-

Item 17: Mr H Morrison and Mrs T Robertson

Item 18: Mr C Munro

3. **Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

4. **Good News Naidheachdan Matha**

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

- **UCI Cycling World Championships 2023 – Downhill Mountain Bike Event Fort William 3-5 August**

Fort William played it's part in making history and helping to stage "biggest cycling event ever" in the world – the UCI Cycling World Championships 2023. The downhill mountain biking event was held over three days at Nevis Range and welcomed almost 20,000 spectators. Across the 13 disciplines covered by the Championships, it anticipated that there would be 1 million spectators and over 1 billion viewers around the world. The Championships had been a fantastic opportunity to showcase what the Highlands and Scotland had to offer and helped to deliver a massive boost to the cycling agenda, with increased awareness and improved infrastructure, such as the brand-new bike park in Fort William.

- **EV Rally of Scotland 16-17 August**

The Highland Council was delighted to be a host authority for the EV Rally of Scotland 2023 which was to take place during 16-17 of August. The event showcased the infrastructure already installed by the Council including over 100 EV charge points with many more planned in the coming months and years as we moved from a government funded model to a sustainable, self-funding model, encouraging a transport transition to electric. The Council and other public sector organisations in the region had an ambition to ensure that access to EV Charging was fair and equitable to all, regardless of where they

lived and worked, being mindful of the challenges of local geography. The ambition now was to accelerate this provision towards the critical mass of charging infrastructure to ensure that range anxiety was a thing of the past.

- **Highland Council Early Adoption 20mph Speed Limit Programme**

The installation of the Highland Wide 20 mph programme delivery continued a pace with, at the time of the Committee, over 75% of installations completed and the remainder of the settlement installation work ongoing. The Highland wide Temporary Road Traffic Regulation Order for the new 20mph limits covering the whole of the Highland Council Area went live on 31 July 2023. In the coming months the team would begin to engage with communities with regards to the new reduced speed limits as part of the statutory consultation process that would be undertaken ahead of decisions that would be made around making these temporary speed limits permanent.

- **Scretan Burn**

Scretan burn active travel route had been completed. The route provided a new active travel route between Cradlehall and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

5. **Corran Ferry Operations and Project Update** **Fios às Ùr mu Obrachaidhean agus Pròiseact Aiseag a' Chorrain**

A detailed verbal update on Corran Ferry Operations and Project was given by the Interim Depute Chief Executive during which he updated Members about the current status of the Maid of Glencoul (the Corran Ferry second vessel), the return of the MV Corran, the ongoing work on the replacement vessel project and other alternatives being considered.

Prior to opening the matter up for discussion, the Chair acknowledged the very real concerns and difficulties the outages were causing for the communities and apologised accordingly. It was recognised that this was a legacy issue that should have been addressed many years ago. He gave reassurance that the Council was in consultation with the UK and Scottish Governments and other partners and staff were working tirelessly to arrive at a solution. He expressed his appreciation for the support of fellow Members across the Chamber for their recognition of the challenge and their support.

From a Lochaber Member perspective it was good to hear that the ferry and shoreside replacement programme was progressing and hopefully a Levelling Up Fund bid would be successful, and also that a backup solution was also being investigated. This issue took up a lot of Lochaber Members' time and the frustration and anger of the communities on the Ardnamurchan/Morven peninsula was understandable. There had been repeated requests for regular and clear communication, providing updates on the situation and explaining the reasons for the ongoing delayed return of the MV Corran, the younger and larger of the two ferries. This frustration and anger grew each time it was announced that the return of the MV Corran was further delayed with little information as to why and an example of the level of feeling was provided. If more information

was given there would be greater understanding regarding the problems Highland Council was facing. It was essential information was shared regularly with Lochaber Members and the communities affected.

During discussion, other Members raised the following main points:-

- it was important to acknowledge the hard work of the crew that had gone in to keeping the service going as long as possible and to the Interim Depute Chief Executive and his officers to try and arrive at a suitable solution;
- alternative vessels had been considered but there were Health and Safety issues to take into account as well as the constraints of the infrastructure in place;
- although this was a problem inherited from multiple previous Administrations, the Council could no longer put temporary solutions in place;
- it was reassuring that communication was to be addressed and this would allay feelings of abandonment and scepticism. The language in the updates was important and the honesty that Members had heard from the Interim Depute Chief Executive was to be encouraged. It was suggested that some of the misunderstandings which had arisen was because the Council was in a very dynamic and challenging environment which changed, at times, at very short notice;
- information to the communities was also needed as regard transport links, shuttle services, how to drive in convoys and the current status of the previously promised 40mph signs;
- improvements to the slipway and replacement vessels could no longer be met from the Council's Capital Programme and every possible avenue of future funding needed to be investigated for what was an essential lifeline to the Ardnamurchan/Morven peninsula;
- with the suggestion of an Emergency Action Plan being put in place Members were assured that, when the Corran Ferry was back in operation, a "lessons learnt" review would take place and which might include the Council investing in a passenger vehicle. However, mitigation measures had been in place and there had been relative confidence in these before;
- further details as to the delay would help explain the situation to the community and would hopefully move away from a blaming approach; and
- working across the political scene was essential.

The Committee **NOTED** the current position.

**6. Revenue Budget Monitoring Final Outturn 2022/23 and Quarter 1 to 30 June 2023 and Service Performance Reporting for 2022/23
Suim Dheireannach Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach 2022/23 agus Cairteal 1 gu 30 Ògmhios 2023 agus Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/35/2023 dated 24 July 2023 Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- regarding paragraph 4.4 of the report, it was highlighted that figures on infrastructure and roads were incorrect;
- in relation to paragraph 4.4.6 of the report, it was queried if staff received a full staff payment increase when appointed to acting up roles;
- regarding 4.4.8 of the report, it was queried why there had been a winter maintenance overspend as it was felt that the weather had not been too adverse;
- it was queried if the Freedom of Information timeline of 20 days could be increased to allow collation of relevant information. However, it was explained this was a Corporate target;
- if the roads service had a weather forecaster, it was queried why the winter weather had been so unexpected and if contingencies had been in place for the additional winter maintenance expenditure;
- regarding school transport and increased costs associated with new contracts, it was queried if these increased costs were non-negotiable and due to increased fuel costs. In this regard, it was also queried if school taxi service costs had increased and were contributing to high charges, as it was felt that this service was a huge overall cost to Council school transport;
- reassurance was sought regarding the increased time to process planning applications as this was a statutory service which only the Highland Council could provide. In this regard it was queried what action plan was in place to improve the service;
- regarding 5.3 of the report, Corran Ferry had forecasted an overspend of just over £1m due to the loss of income. In this regard, information was sought on how much lost income there had been and to provide Members with a breakdown of costs for loss of income, repairs and maintenance and overhaul costs;
- Members welcomed section 4.4.8 of the report regarding the underspend on lighting fees due to the installation of LEDs and reducing carbon emissions. In this regard it was queried when the LED streetlighting programme would be completed, especially as these works generated a saving and contributed to decarbonisation;
- information was sought regarding the reduction of income at car parks, as Members expected an increase due to more car parks being built; and
- as the A836 road had been closed last winter for several days due to gritter breakdowns, it was queried if gritters were reviewed to meet the standard during the off-season in full preparation of the upcoming winter.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Service's revenue monitoring position; and
- ii. the Service's performance and risk information.

**7. Capital Monitoring– Quarter 4 2022/23 and Quarter 1 2023/24
Sgrùdadh Calpa – Cairteal 4 2022/23 agus Cairteal 1 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/36/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial position for financial year 2022/23 with the yearend totals; and
- ii. the financial position as at 30 June 2023 and note the estimated year end forecast.

**8. Developer Contributions
Tabhartasan Luchd-leasachaidh**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/37/2023 dated 25 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- following a presentation in amplification of the report, it was expressed that local residents needed to know that the developer contributions had been spent on mitigating the impact of a new development;
- to reduce the potential of community groups proposing a project for developer contributions, but which had already been identified and discussed by the larger community as part of a local place plan, it was queried how this type of scenario could be avoided as it could lead to disappointment;
- leisure contributions generally seemed to be directed towards properties owned by Highland Council and run by High Life Highland and it was queried if this would preclude any other development in the locality from taking place;
- disappointment was expressed that developer contributions from Ward 17 had been spent outwith the Ward. In this regard, it was queried why contributions were not spent within the Ward they originated from;
- it was queried who would determine when decisions regarding local developer contributions would be referred to the Area Committee. In addition, it was queried how decisions were made regarding spending the contributions in each area;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding developer contributions towards a new secondary school in the Inverness South area;
- thanks were expressed to Officers for their hard work towards the Portree Link Road and the substantial developer contributions which allowed the project to take place;
- updates would be welcomed at future Ward Business Meetings on what exemptions there were for developer contributions so Members could better understand the process;
- information was sought on who set the rates for developer contributions, whether it was national government rates or local councils;

- communities felt they were not part of the decision-making process regarding the distribution of developer contributions;
- it was queried how NHS Highland fitted into the Place Based Plans and Development Plans;
- it was queried if the Capital Programme Board was made up of just officers, or if there were also representatives from the Highland Third Sector and younger persons present;
- Members requested that the main points of the changes be summarised in bullet-points so Community Councils were able to clearly review and discuss them;
- it was queried if developer contributions were set at the start of a project or if they could be increased due to inflation or other factors; and
- it was confirmed that WOC mentioned within the report referred to Woodside of Culloden.

The Committee:-

- AGREED** the minor addition to the protocol for monitoring and managing developer contributions in relation to how members and local communities can shape developer contribution decisions;
- NOTED** the corresponding governance arrangements agreed by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in February;
- AGREED** for developer contribution monitoring balance sheets and forecasting to be reported to the capital programme board, alongside the delivery programme acting as a coordination tool, to better align developer contributions with the capital programme and the programme of development; and
- NOTED** the current balances of all active developer contribution pots for information, and the governance arrangements already in place to coordinate their use.

9. **Dornoch Business Improvement District (BID)** **Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/38/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the assessment made in appendix 1 of the report relative to the Dornoch BID proposal; and
- AGREED** not to exercise the council's right of veto.

10. **Grantown-on-Spey Conservation Area Management Plan and Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan** **Plana Stiùiridh Sgìre Glèidhteachais Bhaile nan Granndach agus Measadh agus Plana Stiùiridh Sgìre Glèidhteachais Shrath Pheofhair**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/39/2023 dated 18 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** and adopt the Grantown-on-Spey Conservation Area Management Plan; and
- ii. **APPROVED** and adopt the Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including an amended Strathpeffer Conservation Area Boundary.

11. **Adopted Tree Management Strategy Update** **Fios às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Stiùiridh Chraobhan fo Urra**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/40/2023 dated 27 June 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- thanks were expressed for the updated report and the hard work that had gone into making the requested adjustments;
- whilst Members welcomed the additional measures, concern was raised that routine tree maintenance strategy was still lacking;
- it was requested that section 5.5 of the report be changed to confirm that the Council would dispose of prunings of Council owned trees. In this regard caution was expressed at this proposal as there were implications on resources which the Council might not have available;
- regarding section 1 of the report, veteran trees being afforded extra protection, it was queried if this would be applied as tree preservation orders;
- regarding section 9 of the report concerning the planting of as many trees as possible to replace a tree which had been removed, it was queried how this would be monitored and recorded;
- regarding paragraph 5.7 of the report, it was felt that flailing roadside verge trees was not a welcome method due to the damage they inflicted to trees and further clarity was requested on this issue to limit it as a possible method;
- information and clarification were sought regarding residents pruning trees and leaving the arisings on communal land and whether there might be cases where these would not be removed by Highland Council, but left as dead-wood; and
- it was emphasised that the HC needed to be a good neighbour with residents affected by trees growing adjacent to their properties and not just focussing on the monetary aspect of maintenance requests. In this regard, it was felt that the Policy required further consideration of this matter.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed amendments as detailed in Section 5 of the report and their incorporation into the adopted Tree Management Strategy.

12. National Planning Framework (NPF)4 and the Development Plan in Highland
Frèam Dealbhadh Nàiseanta 4 agus am Plana Leasachaidh anns a' Ghàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/41/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- following a presentation and during discussion, Members thanked the officers for the report;
- some additional points had been added to recommendation vi, since the report had been written and comments submitted to the Scottish Government, which Members might wish to consider. In addition Members were also advised of a typographical error in recommendation v where “Section 6” should read “Section 7”;
- it was stressed that local conditions, transport and infrastructure would play a significant factor in contributing to the 20 minute neighbourhoods and this should be taken into full consideration. In this regard, it was pointed out that certain parts of Highland would never be able to meet the criteria of a 20 minute neighbourhood;
- concern was expressed about the pace of progress for the Local Development Plans and it should be a priority to push forward this work. In this regard, Members felt that they could assist with this progress by working with community groups to develop Local Plans;
- buses should be a consideration factor for 20 minute neighbourhoods as they could contribute to healthier living for persons by walking to and from bus stops; and
- information was sought whether Community Councils and community development trusts were directly contacted for consultation and discussion about the Local Development Plans.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** Scottish Government’s publication of regulations and guidance for Development Planning and commencement of the relevant legislative provisions, including the extracts of guidance showing overview and key stages of the Local Development Plan process at Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that further to i) above and to Item 15 of this Committee’s meeting on 2 February 2023, the Council’s formal invitation to communities to prepare Local Place Plans was issued on 30 June 2023 with a deadline of 28 June 2024 for Local Place Plans to have been submitted, cleared validation checks and been registered;
- iii. **NOTED** the progress update at Section 5 of the report on the formal commencement of work on the new, single Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) and the corporate status that the HLDP must have and agree the next steps, anticipated milestones and timescales for Evidence Gathering outlined, including work with the Key Agencies Group;

- iv. **NOTED** the resource implications for preparation of the HLDP outlined at Section 5 of the report;
- v. **NOTED** the corresponding governance considerations at Section 7 of the report, including outline of arrangements envisaged for Member involvement and that key changes were expected to be sought to the Council's Scheme of Delegation in October;
- vi. **AGREED** to homologate the Council's submitted response to Scottish Government's consultation, which closed 20 July 2023, on "Local living and 20-minute neighbourhoods: draft planning guidance" at Appendix 2, and submit additional comments as agreed as Committee, to seek explanation of the relationship of Policy 15 with other NPF4 policies, in particular Policy 17 Rural Homes, Policy 27 city town, local and commercial centres and Policy 28 Retail; and
- vii. **AGREED** for submission the Council's draft response to Scottish Government's consultation, which closes on 13 September 2023, on "Effective community engagement in local development planning guidance" at Appendix 3 of the report.

13. Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) 2023/24 Maoin Ath-shlànachadh Nàdair 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/42/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

Having highlighted the importance to prioritise this in communities, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** update on 2023/24 NRF scheme;
- ii. **AGREED** the funding proposals as set out in paragraph 6 of the report; and
- iii. **AGREED** that funding decisions in respect of the grant scheme be delegated as set outlined in paragraph 7 of the report.

14. New National Parks in Scotland Appraisal Framework Frèam Measaidh airson Phàircean Nàiseanta Ùra ann an Alba

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/43/2023 dated 18 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it was hoped that somewhere in Highland would be considered as a new National Park but the process was still less defined. Some groups elsewhere in Scotland were already preparing to campaign in their communities to become a National Park and it was important Highland didn't lag behind;
- there was a group of volunteers in Lochaber preparing a campaign but they needed support from Highland Council, even if it was a point of contact or professional advice. Wards might wish to financially support bids through their Discretionary Budgets;
- any bid to become a National Park needed the approval of Highland Council and well-defined timescales needed to be considered;

- in regard to Question 7 of the Consultation Response, it was suggested that it could have included how National Park designation supported visitor management, what had worked elsewhere and to raise concerns about inappropriate behaviour of some tourists. Any bid approved by the Highland Council would provide an opportunity to highlight these issues but the Chair also referred to Item 17 on the Agenda, Tourism Development, which could take these concerns into consideration;
- the Flow Country in Caithness and Sutherland was hopefully progressing towards World Heritage status and it was questioned if National Park status would also be appropriate. The cooperation of both Area Committees would be necessary; and
- Ward 10, Eilean a' Cheo, would be an ideal location for a National Park as it had very clear boundaries. It was acknowledged that National Plan status also brought disadvantages but in Ward 10 these would be outweighed.

The Committee:-

- AGREED** to **HOMOLOGATE** the response to the New National Parks in Scotland Appraisal Framework and the Nomination Process and Draft Appraisal Framework;
- AGREED** that the Council promotes the pre-registration process within Highland (as per 7.1 paragraph of the report); and
- AGREED** the governance procedure for the Council to provide support to nominations for National Park designation as outlined in paragraph 7.2 of the report.

15. Infrastructure, Economy and Environment Service Plan 2023-2024 Plana Seirbheis Bun-structair, Eaconamaidh agus Àrainneachd 2023–2024

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/44/2023 dated 18 July 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in addition to the priorities in the Council's Corporate Plan, there was also a Net Zero Strategy and climate change needed to be central to decision making and action embedded across all Thematic Groups and Services. It was disappointing therefore that there was no direct reference to Net Zero in the Service Plan and it was contended that it was insufficient to say that the Climate Change remit would continue to be driven through the Climate Change Committee. There was also no risk identified if Net Zero targets were not achieved. In response, it was contended that Net Zero was implicit in a lot of the work of the Service;
- Service Complaints responded to within 5 days in Quarter 4 in 2022/23 was 92%, the target being 80%, and it was important to strive for continual performance. However, concern was expressed that Service Complaints responded to within 20 days was only at 29% and it was suggested a more realistic target should be set. In response, it was explained that the reason the Service had only achieved 29% was due to the complex nature

of some of these complaints but, as the targets were set at a Corporate level, it was not possible to change this;

- the target date of September 2024 for the Service Priority “Supporting Parents into Work” was questioned;
- in relation to the Service Vision of Place Based Strategy for Highland, where the Service would work with communities, partners and the private sector to prepare long term, sustainable strategies for development in Highland, it was questioned how it was proposed communities would be involved; and
- the improvement action associated with the promotion and enhancement of Highland’s rich heritage and culture referred to Cultural and Heritage events including Archaeology Festival, Highland Heritage Trail and Blas Festival but it was important to also promote the other various heritage sites throughout Highland.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Service Plan for 2023/24.

16. Rapid Road Repair Team Update **Fios às Ùr mu Sgioba Grad-Chàradh Rathaidean**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/45/2023 dated 19 July 2023 by Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an additional £2.66m had been allocated to the Rapid Road Repair Team and the report evidenced the benefit of that;
- once up and running the Team would make a significant difference to the speed, as well as the numbers, of repairs. It would also free up time for Area Teams all over Highland to focus on other key priorities and it was important to promote this;
- assurances were sought, and provided, that the Team would complement the Area Teams;
- Members and communities were looking forward to seeing the Team on the ground and some initiatives, such as branding and/or livery, would help to make them more visible;
- information was sought, and again provided, as to how priority of repairs was to be determined;
- concern was expressed at the distances the Team might had to travel but it was confirmed that allowances had been made for travel and accommodation;
- delays had been encountered in recruitment but the Team would be operational shortly. In addition, in regard to the weather deteriorating as time went on, it was explained that, while some patches might be weather dependent, not all were and work could continue;
- it was important to ensure efficient use of time and that there was a reporting system in place to help effectively deploy the Team. In this regard, there was a communication challenge to inform communities how to report potholes; and

- any additional improvements to help Area Teams bring roads up to acceptable standards was to be welcomed. These Teams were to be commended for the work they did with the resources available and improvements were already evident and would be enhanced further by the Rapid Road Repair Team.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of this report.

17. Tourism Development Leasachadh Turasachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/46/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- across Highland there were a number of interested parties and stakeholders but there was also a degree of fragmentation and this was an opportunity to coalesce to develop a strategic pan Highland approach;
- it was disappointing that while one Service was putting in new public conveniences, another Service was closing theirs. It was hoped that the ones referred to in the report would be well taken care off. Reference too was made of the lack of maintenance of signage but the Chair reminded Members that the aim of this report was not about infrastructure but developing strategic priorities;
- tourism was one of the biggest industries in Highland and therefore a coordinated approach was necessary;
- some areas were suffering from “over” tourism and a strategy suitable for the Highlands was to be welcomed. Officers were encouraged to start involving stakeholders as soon as possible; and
- many groups had good ideas and these should be tapped into.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the current context and policy framework for the tourism industry in Highland and Scotland;
- NOTED** the important and wide-ranging role of the Council within the tourism industry, particularly in terms of service and infrastructure provision; and
- AGREED** to the commencement of work on a tourism plan for Highland and to the proposed key next steps set out in Section 5 of the report.

18. Visitor Levy Bill Bile Cis Luchd-tadhail

Declaration of Interest: Mr H Morrison and Mrs T Robertson declared financial interests in this item as a holiday let provider and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as an accommodation provider. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/47/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the well-structured report and looked forward to future updates as the Tourism Plan was being developed, especially as there were numerous infrastructure issues affecting different tourist hotspots around the highlands;
- it was felt that the visitor tourist levy would enable the HC to undertake desperately required infrastructure improvements and this in turn would help both tourists and the local community;
- assurance was sought that existing tourist funding provided by Highland Council would not be withdrawn when the levy costs were implemented, as it was felt that communities would otherwise see no real difference on tourist infrastructure expenditure;
- it was queried what engagement there was with other local authorities in terms of setting the levy rate;
- Members stressed the need to ensure that everything was in place to meet the target date of 2026 for the tourist levy implementation;
- a significant effort should be made to ensure Highland communities were aware of the tourist levy concept and the investment benefits it would bring to the highlands;
- whilst the report at paragraph 4.4 stated that the levy would not include campervans, it was felt that this should be changed to include campervans, caravans and motorhomes due to the wear, tear and significant damage they impacted on roads and verges, including leaving waste in fields and roadsides. In this regard, the Ranger Service observed 3,286 motorhomes parked outwith official campsites on Skye between May and end of July 2023;
- it was suggested that, in relation to the Scottish Parliament's Call for Views (Questions and Recommended Responses) Q9 could be extended to include digital infrastructure. In this regard, it was also suggested that Question 10 could be extended to include online travel agents as it was felt that this would remove a significant proportion of the administrative burden on small and microbusinesses;
- regarding tourist levy revenue raised locally, it was felt that expenditure of the levy should be decided locally and spent locally;
- it was queried if the tourist levy would include VAT and, if so, what would be the implication on local businesses;
- the levy's purpose was not only to assist in promoting tourism but also to assist in mitigating the inconvenience that tourism brought to communities. In this regard it was suggested that infrastructure have signage displayed to confirm that it was built with tourist levy; and

- clarification was sought regarding the governance procedure on spending the tourist levy income.

The Committee

- NOTED** the introduction of the Local Visitor Levy Bill to the Scottish Parliament and the summary of the content of the Bill;
- NOTED** the proposed key issues which would inform the Council's response to the Scottish Parliament's consultation on the Bill as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- AGREED** to extend Questions and Recommended Responses to 9 and 10, of the Scottish Parliament's Call for Views, to include digital infrastructure and online travel agents respectively.

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

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/48/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the successful pull down of the 2023/24 and 2024/25 UKSPF allocations and delivery progress across the programme; and
- AGREED** to the proposed Skills Programme as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

20. **Highlands and Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-28 Ro-innleachd Eaconamach Roinneil Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/49/2023 dated 24 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Draft Final Highlands and Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-2028; and
- AGREED** to homologate the Highland Council Officer response to the Draft Final Highlands and Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-28.

21. **SSEN Community Benefit Fund Consultation Co-chomhairleachadh Maoin Sochair Coimhearsnachd SSEN**

There had been Report No. ECI/50/2023 dated 8 August 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

In commending the strong balanced response to the consultation, it was important a degree of balance was applied if it was something Highland Council was to administer to ensure that the communities who housed the majority of SSEN's infrastructure received the majority of the benefit. Highland was

advocating for a much more localised approach than perhaps SSEN were proposing.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the draft consultation response prepared; and
- ii. **AGREED** to submit a Council response, including an offer to continue to actively engage with SSEN as they develop their Community Benefit Fund.

21a. Appointments to Sub-Committees/Working Groups Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean/Buidhnean Obrach

- * The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Highland Council the membership of the Wildfires Working Group as follows:-

Mr M Baird, Mr C Birt, Ms S Fanet, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Mr P Logue, Ms K MacLean, Mrs T Robertson, Mr R Stewart.

22. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. South PAC – 22 March 2023;
- ii. Joint North PAC & South PAC – 22 March 2023;
- iii. North PAC – 19 April 2023;
- iv. South PAC – 3 May 2023;

and

- v. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the City Region Deal Monitoring Group 18 January 2023, 18 April 2023; and
- vi. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Coastal Communities Fund:- 16 June 2023

23. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A (4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown in the reports.

24. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/51/2023 dated 18 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

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

25. Housing Development Initiatives
Iomairtean Leasachadh Taigheadais

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/52/2023 dated 21 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

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

26. Land and Property
Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/53/2023 dated 20 July 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

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

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held remotely on Monday 21 August 2023 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr R Gunn
Mr W MacKay
Mr S Mackie
Ms J McEwan
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie

Officials in attendance:

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure and Environment
Ms F Cameron, Project Officer (Community Regeneration), Infrastructure and Environment
Mr M Crowe, Access Officer, Infrastructure and Environment
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

In Attendance:

Station Commander P Farrell, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr R Gunn in the Chair.

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Liesgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Jarvie.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Caithness Committee.

4. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 29 May 2023 which were approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No CC/13/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In presenting the report, the Station Commander invited Members to attend an open day being held at Thurso Fire Station on 9 September 2023.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- further information was sought and provided on the Service's successful fire skills programme involving young people from Thurso High School;
- it was hoped the above programme would encourage young people to join the Service in future and it provided a range of benefits in terms of life skills; and
- the fact Thurso Fire Station was to take delivery of a new fire appliance was welcomed. Details were provided on its enhanced capabilities and arrangements would be made for Members to have a demonstration.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

6. Winter Service Plan for 2023-24 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023-24

There had been circulated Report No CC/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, Members welcomed the Plan and the encouragement for communities to become involved in the winter resilience scheme locally.

In response to questions, a summary was provided on the difference between Bear Scotland and the Council's winter service. Unlike the former, the Council did not operate a 24 hour service, and it was understood that Bear Scotland had certain conditions imposed on their trunk road contract in relation to the spread rates of salt that was different to the national guidance followed by the Council. There was also a greater volume of traffic on the trunk road which had a bearing on the effectiveness of the salt

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24.

7. Thurso Common Good Asset Register Clàr So-mhaoin Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Theòrsa

There had been circulated Report No CC/15/23 by the Acting Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance and Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- officers be commended on the excellent work being undertaken on the Asset Register and Members looked forward to continuing dialogue on the development of the Common Good Fund;
- a detailed explanation was sought and provided around the financial risk to local Members associated with the Fund assuming responsibility for its assets, given there would be maintenance costs with some buildings. Further discussion with Members would be required to balance the need to allow the Fund to generate income alongside the need to assume responsibility for its assets, bearing in mind all common good funds were required to cover their costs;
- further clarity was sought and provided that a public consultation would be required on any proposal to dispose of Common Good assets and this would also most likely have to go to court, given the public nature of the use of the buildings. Publication of the Asset Register drew a line in terms of what was formally considered to be Common Good assets. Members would need to consider each asset in turn and decide what information they required; and
- once the asset register was published, regular reports would be brought to the Area Business Meeting and the Committee and reference to other similar common good funds in Highland in respect of the type of reports Members could expect to receive.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the contents of the Asset Register in the format for publication (Appendix 1);
- ii **NOTED** the content of the document titled “Thurso Common Good property consultation representations and responses” (Appendix 2);
- iii **AGREED** to the publication of the Common Good Asset register for Thurso;
- iv **AGREED** to the reclassification of the property included in the Register and to the creation of a Common Good Fund for Thurso;
- v **NOTED** that Thurso Common Good property will continue to be maintained by Highland Council until such time as an income source is established to sustain Thurso Common Good assets; and
- vi **NOTED** that the creation of a Thurso Common Good Fund, and its financial position, will be reported to the next meeting of Highland Council under the minutes of this meeting given that all Highland Councillors are custodians of Common Good Funds across Highland.

8. Wick Common Good Fund Quarterly Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige

There had been circulated Report No CC/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the need to move forward as quickly as possible to consider the overall strategy for the future of Fund with a focus on income generation from its assets and sustainability. Specific reference was made to the potential to maximise the income from the Riverside Car Park and Wick Town Hall; and
- the above be considered in depth by Ward 3 Members at a separate meeting as soon as possible with the local community council being asked to submit their considerations. It was important this was an open and transparent process while at the same time complying with the relevant legal requirements.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the position of Wick Common Good Fund at the end of the first quarter for 23/24;
- APPROVED** the proposed property budget of £20,000 in respect of Wick Town Hall utility costs; and
- NOTED** that a strategy for the Fund will be prepared with a report taken to a future meeting of this Committee.

9. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CC/17/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

In discussion, Members indicated their support for the work of the Wick Development Trust. The application was robust in terms of meeting the qualifying criteria and approval would improve the facility and bring benefits to Wick and its visitors and significant investment opportunities for the regeneration of the town. The project would also benefit the wider area in Caithness.

The Committee **APPROVED** the application presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:-

Applicant:	Project:	Grant Awarded:
Wick Development Trust	Wick River Campsite – Phase 2 Toilet Block & Facilities Building	£90,000

10. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Ward 2 Thurso Football Academy - £1500

Wards 2 & 3 Sidhchailleannart-“Legends of Caithness” - £1350 (£675 from each Ward)

Wards 2 & 3 FEIS GHALLAIBH-Caithness Feis - £2500 (£1250 from each Ward)

Ward 3 Pentland Parish Church - £800.00

Ward 3 - HLH-Wick Youth Development - £1500 – payment yet to be processed

The meeting ended at 11.05am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the **Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey/Remotely** on 21 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce

Mrs M Cockburn

Mr R Jones

Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager

Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer

Mr C Irvine, Community Works Officer

Mr G Kennedy, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure and Environment

Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager

Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Inspector C Johnstone, Police Scotland

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

Mr R Jones in the Chair**Business****1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not required to be exercised in relation to the business of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee.

**4. Police Area Performance Report
Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated report No BSAC/12/23 by the Area Commander, Police Scotland.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- concerns were raised about the road resurfacing works in the Badenoch and Strathspey area due to take place in the lead up to Thunder in the Glens as large numbers of powerful motorbikes driving over a newly resurfaced road would constitute a significant safety risk. Inspector Johnstone undertook to write to the Committee Chair highlighting the risk and calling for the works to be delayed. It was confirmed that the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment had been made aware of Members' concerns surrounding the proposed resurfacing;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that there were no plans to close Aviemore Police Station and it would continue to be manned 24 hours a day.
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that a Staff Restructuring Programme was taking place across the Highlands and the role of Station Officers was being reviewed. Staff levels were good in Badenoch and Strathspey but since levels were lower elsewhere the problem of staff from Badenoch and Strathspey being used to help cover shortages in other areas was likely to continue;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that drug prevention talks would be continuing in High Schools and work would start on delivering age-specific talks at Primary Schools;
- the work being done to combat speeding and dangerous driving in the area was making local people feel safer;
- the increase in sexual crimes may have been a result of the work being done nationally to provide safe spaces and support to people reporting these crimes;
- information was sought and provided on what happened when cars were abandoned in fields after going off the road; and
- it was queried if there were any possible solutions being considered to decrease the gridlock occurring in towns and villages as a result of diversions being put in place due to accidents on the A9.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023; and
- AGREED** that the Chair would write to Police Scotland highlighting the Committee's concerns around the possible loss of Station officers in the area.

5. **Winter Service Plan 2023/24** **Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/13/23 dated 12 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the scale of the map showing the routes to be gritted would be increased to show greater detail of gritting routes within towns and villages as well as pavement gritting routes;
- communication needed to be improved in relation to streets that were unable to be gritted due to obstacles such as parked cars;
- it was suggested that information about gritting routes should be displayed in public places;

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that all grit boxes would be filled in advance of the colder weather. However, it was added that the filling of grit boxes and the gritting of roads were the responsibility of the same staff and the gritting of roads needed to be prioritised meaning that some grit boxes may not be able to be refilled immediately once emptied;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that there were the same number of gritter drivers available as last year; and
- further discussion took place surrounding the resurfacing works discussed under item 4, during which it was confirmed that these works had already begun. Members' reiterated their concerns regarding the safety risks associated with these works as well as the disruption that would be caused to the area's biggest tourist event. The Community Works Officer confirmed that these works would be suspended immediately which was unanimously supported by Members.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 subject to the scale of the route map being increased and for a plan showing pavement gritting routes to be included;
- NOTED** the decision of officers to immediately suspend all surface dressing/resurfacing works in the Badenoch and Strathspey area until after the end of the Thunder in the Glens event on 25-27 August 2023.

6. **Ward Discretionary Budget** **Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** that no Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since the previous Committee meeting on 29 May 2023.

7. **Badenoch & Strathspey Repurposing COVID-19 Fund** **Maoin Ath-adhbharachaidh COVID-19 Bhàideanach & Shrath Spè**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/14/23 dated 26 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, disappointment was expressed over the lack of funding for playparks in Newtonmore and information was sought, and provided, on developments concerning the playpark in Aviemore.

The Committee **AGREED** the repurposing of the following COVID-19 funds:-

- Play Area Improvements within Badenoch and Strathspey - £3,600

8. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 29 May 2023 which had been approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

It was highlighted that the Cairngorm National Park Authority had been wrongly named in the minutes of the previous meeting and it was confirmed that this would be rectified in future minutes.

**9. Traffic Regulation Orders – Glenmore (Parking Enforcement)
Òrdughan Riaghladh Trafaig – An Gleann Mòr (Co-èigneachadh Parcaidh)**

The Order was following the Statutory Consultation Process. The initial proposals for the Order had been shared with stakeholders and Elected Members in June 2023. Feedback subsequently received had resulted in amendments, where possible, to the initial proposals. The Final Draft Order had been issued for public consultation week beginning 14 August 2023, seeking formal objections by Wednesday 13 September 2023.

Post Consultation, officers would consider formal objections received and would attempt to resolve these objections directly with objectors. Any objections which could not be resolved would be presented to Members at a future Committee to agree the next course of action.

During discussion, in response to a comment that it was the responsibility of the landowner to provide additional parking, it was confirmed that Forestry and Land Scotland was actively pursuing the possibility of using the Hayfield for overflow parking.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

**10. Traffic Regulation Orders – Glenmore (Speed Limits)
Òrdughan Riaghladh Trafaig – An Gleann Mòr (Cuingealachaidhean Astair)**

The proposed speed limit restrictions Order was following the Statutory Consultation Process. The initial proposals for the Order had been shared with stakeholders and Elected Members in June 2023. Feedback subsequently received had resulted in amendments, where possible, to the initial proposals.

The Final Draft Order was due to be issued for public consultation week beginning 14 August 2023, seeking formal objections by Wednesday 13 September 2023. Post Consultation, officers would consider formal objections received and would attempt to resolve these objections directly with objectors. Any objections which could not be resolved would be presented to Members at a future Committee to agree the next course of action.

During discussion, the simplification of speed limits by reducing the number of different speed limit zones was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 24 August 2023 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Ms L Kraft
Dr C Birt	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mrs M Cockburn	Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Fraser	Ms K MacLean
Mr R Gunn	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)	Mrs M Reid (remote)
Ms L Johnston	Mrs T Robertson
Ms E Knox	Mrs L Saggars (remote)

Non-Members present (remote):

Mr M Baird	Mr J McGillivray
Ms M Hutchison	Mr D Millar
Mr R Jones	

NHS Highland representatives:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland (remote)
Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing, NHS Highland (remote)

Third sector representatives in attendance:

Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance
Mr H Tedstone, Highland Hospice

Also in attendance:

Ms S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland

Participating Officials:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
Ms F Malcolm, Head of Integration Adult Social Care, Health and Social Care
Mr I Kyle, Head of Performance and Improvement, Health and Social Care
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health, Health and Social Care
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work, Health and Social Care
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs P Munro and Mrs M Paterson.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been required to be exercised in relation to the business of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

**4. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

Updates were provided on the following issues:

- community events had been held over the summer by Child Health Visitors as part of Family Health Promotion and Child Development;
- work was being undertaken with NHS Highland colleagues to ease pressure in Raigmore Hospital, especially around recruitment and delayed discharge;
- the Handyperson scheme, which supported people to live safely and independently in their own homes, had been reviewed to assess needs and establish how to deliver services from 2024 onwards. The scheme would form part of the Strategic Plan for Adult Services 2024-27;
- in relation to The Orchard Care Home, an apology was issued for the cessation of respite care during the summer months. Work was being undertaken to resolve the situation as soon as possible, and assurance was provided on the commitment to this key area of service provision;
- a report on disability, including Self-Directed Support and respite care, would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee;
- consultation on the Strategic Plan for Adult Services 2024-27 was underway, with four public engagement events planned; and
- the Committee Chair and the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care, had recently visited Inverness Women's Aid and would report back in due course on joint work being undertaken.

During discussion, Members sought assurance that sufficient publicity was being undertaken in relation to consultation on the Strategic Plan for Adult Services, particularly in relation to community councils and the public. It was clarified that NHS Highland was the lead agency for the Plan, the dates of public events would be forwarded to the Committee, and the publicity measures would be reviewed.

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and **AGREED** to review the publicity being undertaken in relation to the Strategic Plan for Adult Services and undertake further engagement if required.

**5. Revenue Budget Monitoring and Performance Reporting for Q1 2023/24 –
01 April 2023 to 30 June 2023 and Final Outturn 2022/23
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Suim Dheireannach 2022-23 agus
Sgrùdadh is Coileanadh Cairteil a h-Aon**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/12/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the reported understaffing was a key concern, especially in relation to supporting families undertaking kinship care, and dealing with children with challenging behaviour. This was acknowledged as a risk area, and resources were being targeted on a priority basis. A summary was provided of measures being undertaken to address the social worker shortage, and thanks were expressed to staff who were working under pressure;
- the reduced number of out of Highland foster care placements was welcomed, as were the efforts being made to implement 'The Promise'. Both these achievements had positive outcomes for the children and their families, and often resulted in reduced pressure on the budget;
- assurance was sought and provided that support for kinship carers was a key focus, including helping carers to maximise any income to which they were entitled;
- it was welcomed that staffing challenges, especially in remote and rural areas, were being looked at across all Council services, and these challenges had been drawn to the attention of Scottish Government officials at a recent National Care Service event in Strathpeffer;
- there was a need to rebrand the social care industry to make careers in this area more attractive, to consider offering jobs with accommodation, and to look at other Scottish local authorities for comparison. These issues were being addressed in the Strategic Plan, work was being undertaken with the Housing Service, and a report covering staffing was due to be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;
- the invoicing team were thanked for their work on timely payments;
- it would be helpful if more could be done to integrate children's and adult services to allow care staff to work in both sectors. Ms J Douglas gave a brief summary of work being undertaken to improve integrated multi-generation services, with a pilot proposal being worked on;
- it would be helpful if more flexibility could be built into SVQ care qualifications to provide more transferable skills. It was disappointing that some staff with considerable experience might leave because of an unwillingness to undertake qualifications;
- information was sought on outcomes from a recent campaign to recruit more foster carers, and this would be provided to Mrs M Reid once the figure were available; and
- the benefits of improved diet and nutrition for children was summarised, and more action on this was urged.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the forecast revenue position as at Quarter 1 of the 2023/24 financial year and the final out-turn position in terms of the financial year 2022/23;
- ii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. the Service's performance and risk information.

6. Integrated Children's Service Plan 2023-2026 Plana Seirbheis Chloinne Amalaichte 2023-2026

There had been circulated Report No HCW/13/23 by the Chair of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Board.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- reference was made to the issues raised during Item 5 about the importance of diet and nutrition to child development and health, and information was provided on the joint strategic needs assessment being carried out, public health work being undertaken in this area, and key pieces of work being undertaken from a Health, Social Care and Wellbeing perspective. It was proposed that Dr Birt meet with the Strategic Lead Child Health outwith the meeting to discuss the issue further;
- the event planned for the following day to officially launch the Plan was welcomed. It was suggested the voice of young people was missing, and a summary was provided of the participation strategy that was being developed to ensure participation and co-design by young people. Reference was also made to the intention to produce a child-friendly version of the Plan;
- information was sought and provided on the extent to which various groups and third sector organisations had been included in the development of the Plan, including the Highland Youth Network. Assurance was provided on the collaborative approach taken to developing the Plan and third sector involvement in the process;
- in relation to the 'Voice and Participation of Children and Young People' section of the Plan, the role of the youth work strategy was queried;
- there were concerns that the Highland Poverty Group, referenced in the section of the Plan named 'Integrated Planning Our Themes', and the Highland Youth Work Development Group, were not meeting, or were not meeting frequently enough. It was suggested that, at times, it might be appropriate for third sector representatives to take a lead role in some groups, rather than relying on the Council. This would facilitate giving a stronger voice to communities;
- it was welcomed that Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC), and Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included (SHANARRI) Indicators were underpinning the work of the Plan and, although there was room for improvement, the work being undertaken was praised;
- national strategies to encourage breastfeeding were welcomed, and a recent article in the Lancet reported an increase in breastfeeding in mothers under 25, and lowering of tobacco-related deaths, since the introduction of baby boxes. It was suggested that more could be done to support mothers expressing milk, and that more data was required on the reasons for mothers ceasing breastfeeding. A summary was provided of the key issues used to promote breastfeeding, including the benefits for the child, benefits for the relationship with the mother, and personal benefits for the mother;
- it was disappointing that efforts to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scottish law had been turned down by the UK Government. It was due to be amended and a further attempt to incorporate into Scottish law was anticipated and, in the meantime, it was welcomed as a principle to which the Council adhered;
- NHS Highland was a key partner, and had endorsed the Plan;
- a workshop for Members to go through the detail of the Plan was sought;

- it was important to identify children with additional support needs at an early stage, and particular reference was made to the importance of tackling bullying. It was suggested that Education officials might have more information on strategies and policies in this area;
- the acknowledgement of the importance of play in the Plan was welcomed, and the need for flexible play spaces for families was emphasised. Information was sought and provided on collaborative discussions taking place around commissioning; and
- the key role of the third sector in the delivery of the Plan was summarised, and the importance of capturing and recognising all key outcomes was reiterated.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the work undertaken by the Integrated Children's Service Plan Board in producing the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026; and
- NOTED** the plan which has been approved by the Community Planning Partnership Board; and
- AGREED** to hold a workshop for Members to consider in more detail the issues contained in the Integrated Children's Service Plan 2023-2026.

7. Highland Children and Young People's Needs Assessment Measadh Feumalachdan Chloinne is Dhaoine Òga na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- attention was drawn to the need to support children and young people to maintain a healthy weight throughout childhood, and it was pointed out that the prevalence of obesity had increased in 2021 but had reduced again in 2022. The Employee of the Year award had this year been awarded to a cook at Croy Primary School for her work to promote good nutrition to pupils;
- it was welcomed that the importance of early identification of support needs was being acknowledged, and a further update was sought and provided;
- information was sought on whether the immunisation programme being taken out of the GP contract had impacted on the number of vaccinations being undertaken in remote and rural areas. Substantive data on this was not yet available from Public Health, and might require a report in future. Attention was drawn to recent publicity around the increase in prevalence of measles across Europe and the need to encourage uptake of the MMR immunisation. Ms J Douglas offered to share publicity material around this;
- information was sought and provided on access to dentistry and support for children's oral health;
- concern was expressed at the proportion of pupils aged 15-17 reporting having used substances in Highland (2018) and reference was made to the work of Planet Youth, which it was hoped would have a positive impact;
- it was felt the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation did not properly take into account the effect of rural deprivation and poverty;
- the third sector data in the report was welcomed;

- shared accessible language use was vital; and
- in response to concern about the waiting times for Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, attention was drawn to the service's strategic improvement plan, following the reshaping of the service delivery model, on which more information could be provided outwith the meeting if required.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- the work undertaken by the Integrated Children's Service Plan Board in commissioning the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to support the development of the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026; and
- the detail of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

8. Health and Social Care Service Plan 2023/24 Plana Seirbheis Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No HCW/15/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Service Plan for 2023/24.

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider Item 10 at this stage.

10. Champions Updates Cunntasan nan Curaidhean

Brief updates were provided by the following Champions on their work:

Adult: Isabelle MacKenzie

A short presentation was provided covering the new national dementia strategy for Scotland, how to improve dementia-friendly communities in Highland, and Age Scotland's About Dementia project.

The Committee thanked Mrs MacKenzie, **NOTED** the update, and **AGREED** to:

- circulate the presentation to the Committee; and
- liaise with Corporate Communications about providing publicity to the groups mentioned during the presentation.

Children's: Lyndsey Johnston

- regular meetings were being held with the Youth Convener and Highland Youth Voice, which had provided valuable insights and a deeper understanding of issues;
- an inspirational meeting of the Highland Youth Parliament had been attended;
- the Youth Convener was commended for encouraging engagement;
- Highland Third Sector Interface children and young people's seminars had been attended; and
- as part of The Promise Board, Ms Johnstone hoped that her own experiences as a Looked After Child would be of assistance.

The Committee thanked Ms Johnston and **NOTED** the update.

Trauma: Liz Kraft

- the background to trauma informed practice, and the definition of trauma, were summarised;
- it was important not to add to trauma through service delivery practices, and organisational leaders should be trauma-informed;
- NHS Education for Scotland trauma training was available, and attention was also drawn to the development of training the trainer programmes and how to inform newly qualified social workers; and
- plans for a trauma summit in January 2024 were outlined and funding was being sought for a Trauma Lead.

The Committee thanked Ms Kraft, **NOTED** the update, and **AGREED** the Member briefing 'Trauma is Everyone's Business' be re-circulated to the Committee.

9. Residential Children's Services & After Care Services Seirbheis Chloinne Chòmhnaidheach & Seirbheis Cùrain Às Dèidh Làimhe

There had been circulated Report No HCW/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

A presentation was provided covering residential care in Highland, Highland Homes, models of care, Highland Star, transformation and change, bringing children home to Highland, challenges, improvements, achievements and plans for the future.

The Chair thanked everyone involved in the improvements to the service and, during discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the support being provided to keep children with their families was welcomed, as was the move towards small, safe, nurturing environments which, it was believed, would reduce the number of Looked After Children who went missing;
- the number of 'good' and 'excellent' gradings for Highland care homes from the Care Inspectorate was commended;
- the public apology at the start of the meeting for the cessation of respite care at The Orchard was welcomed, and it was hoped full services would be reinstated as soon as possible; and
- it was suggested that detailed briefings be provided at Ward level on what Member support could be offered to children's homes. However, the importance of protecting confidentiality and not crossing operational lines of responsibility was emphasised.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the content of the report which aimed to offer transparency and accountability for Highland Council's Residential Services; and

- ii. **AGREED** an annual report be presented to Committee from the Residential and Aftercare Service to enable continuous scrutiny and assurance of improvements to the service.

**11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The following Minutes had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 29 March 2023; and
- ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 7 March 2023 and 22 May 2023.

The meeting ended at 2.25pm.

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The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 28 August 2023 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

Non-Members also present:

Ms B Jarvie (Remote)
Mr P Oldham (Remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive
Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment
Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal and Governance
Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support & Engagement
Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Communities and Place
Mr C Baxter, Team Leader, Sustainable Transport
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector J Hill, Area Commander (Inverness Area Command), Police Scotland

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

Mr I Brown in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chair referred to the death of former Councillor Norrie Donald on 4 August 2023. Mr Donald had had an extensive length of service in local government, serving a total of 18 years. Condolences, on behalf of the Committee, were expressed to his family and friends.

Business

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr D Gregg.

2. **Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

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

Items 5, 6, 7, 8, 10 (d), 12 (ii), 12 (iii) - Mr A Christie

3. **Birthday Honours** **Urraman Co-là-breith**

With Members having paid tribute to those concerned, the Committee **NOTED** that the following individuals had been recognised in the Birthday's Honours List: -

- Ms Anne McCreadie - for services to the community in Merkinch.
- Ms Ina Melville - for her services to young people and the community of Smithton.
- Ms Sheila Bruce - for services to the community in Inverness and the Highlands.

4. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the City of Inverness Area Committee.

5. **Police – Area Performance Summary** **Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

Mr A Christie made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and a Board Member of Inverness BID. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No CIA/20/23 dated 17 August 2023 by the Inverness Area Commander.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the impact on policing of the financial crisis was queried;
- it was also queried if the increase in shoplifting was a result of the cost of living and energy crisis;
- the significant increase in hate crimes was of concern but it was pleasing to note that, as a result of improvements in the detection of drugs, levels of drug possession had decreased;
- many victims of fraud were elderly and vulnerable and new innovative ways of combatting this were necessary;
- the Council had introduced a number of 20mph zones and information was sought, and provided, as to how these were being enforced;

- Community Councils would welcome more information from Police Scotland and methods as to how this, and greater community engagement, could be achieved were explored;
- in response to a query, Members were urged to encourage the public to report instances of crime, often where it was down to one or two individuals who then had a detrimental effect on others. Where this took place in Council houses/flats, the Housing and Property Service should also be involved;
- there was concern that the Police were less visible in the City Centre but, as referred to later in the agenda, it was confirmed they would still be using accommodation in the Town House as a local base;
- there were reported instances where it was feared that, as a result of a number of road traffic collisions, there had been a delay in answering 101 calls;
- whilst Highland might not have the population of other areas, it was important that its geography was taken into account;
- the increase in the number of children who absconded was of concern;
- information was sought as to the number of Police Officers from other ethnic backgrounds and how Police Scotland actively linked with different communities; and
- Members expressed their confidence in the work of Police Scotland, recognising the difficult issues they had to contend with.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

6. Making Academy Street a Place for Everyone A' Dèanamh Sràid na h-Acadamaidh na h-Àite do na h-Uile

Mr A Christie made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and a Board Member of Inverness BID. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/21/23 dated 17 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

Prior to the commencement of debate reference was made to a letter which had been circulated to Committee Members from solicitors acting on behalf on the owners of the Eastgate Centre. In order to make an informed decision, advice was sought from the Head of Legal and Governance.

At this juncture, the Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A (4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be temporarily excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the advice to be provided involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 12 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

The Head of Legal and Governance then provided his advice, after which the public were invited back into the meeting.

Following the legal advice the item continued and a presentation was then undertaken by officers where the context of the proposal was set out. Improving Academy Street was part of the City Strategy and it was important to improve the environment of the city centre for all users. Significant engagement had been undertaken but further consultation would take place going forward. A video and PowerPoint presentation setting out the broad aims and objectives of the scheme was then shown.

Following the presentation, and during lengthy discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- officers were thanked for their hard work and willingness to meet with groups and individuals to address concerns. Disappointment was therefore expressed at some comments made by individuals directed to officers, something which Members found unacceptable;
- it was acknowledged Academy Street needed to change;
- some Members reported having received representations in support of the proposals including from local residents, teachers, parents, disability groups, health professionals and active travel campaigners. In addition, at a recent consultative breakfast, groups represented, with the exception of Business Improvement District (BID) and the City Alliance, had supported the proposals;
- the views of BID had been taken into account and the scheme considered by the Committee in November 2022 had been adapted accordingly;
- consultation would continue on the proposals moving forward, including statutory consultation, and information was sought, and provided, as to how and when this would happen;
- many supporting the proposals were customers who indicated that they were more likely to come to the City centre as a result as it would be a safer, more attractive, cleaner, greener place to trade, shop and dine. It was therefore important that a more desirable and vibrant environment was provided to encourage people to come and spend time in Academy Street;
- encouraging more people, such as cyclists and pedestrians, into Academy Street would encourage more spend. It was also hoped the economic impact assessment would look at the prospect of continuing decline in Academy Street if nothing was done;
- there was evidence that reducing traffic increased footfall and economic activity and, in Inverness itself, business unit vacancy rates were lower in pedestrianised areas such as the High Street, Inglis Street and Baron Taylor's Street;
- 45% of households in the Central Ward did not have access to a car and reference was made to the correlation between levels of deprivation and car ownership, car promoting policies benefiting the more affluent;
- if car usage was to be reduced then it was important to make public transport and active travel more available and attractive, including providing adequate Park and Ride, bus, taxi and active travel infrastructure. This was a crucial step towards changing behaviour and embracing alternative modes of transportation. In this regard it was queried if initiatives such as Park and Ride would be concurrent or consecutive. Reducing carbon emissions would also make significant inroads towards a more sustainable and ecological future;
- the design took into account the needs of the blind and visually impaired and those who used wheelchairs and other mobility equipment. It would also provide a safer road for cycling, an efficient bus lane, wider pavements for walking and wheeling and vehicle access for deliveries and drop off;

- previous Administrations had discussed taking action to improve Academy Street and reference was made to a Development Brief in 2016 where it was agreed to start consultation on how to improve walking and cycling routes and manage vehicle movements and reconfigure streets at Academy Street and Strothers Lane. This also demonstrated the length and breadth of consultation;
- this scheme had support and potential funding and it needed to move forward in a progressive way;
- Academy Street was marred by traffic jams and was noisy and polluted;
- the Council had a climate pollution reduction policy and, if Highland Council was to meet its Net Zero targets, action was needed to reduce traffic. This proposal would improve air quality and enhance the city centre;
- assurances were sought, and provided, that the Economic Impact Assessment would be independently carried out;
- although many who responded to BID's survey were opposed to the proposals, only 90 out of 800 members being a small proportion of BID's membership had taken part;
- it was important to strengthen the Council's relationship with the business community;
- alternative solutions, including direct access to Rose Street, were suggested. However, it was felt the proposal, in its present form, was premature and there was a perception that not enough true consultation had taken place. Furthermore, all the facts were needed before a proper and informed decision could be reached;
- change was needed but for the right reasons and this had the support and backing of local residents and businesses;
- it was important to have an economic impact assessment before progressing, to do more remodelling on the displaced traffic and to revisit the vehicle cap;
- a trial of a preferred option was proposed so that businesses and the public could see what it was like and it was suggested that a local referendum then be carried out so the views of the people of Inverness could be taken into account in a clear and structured manner and then taken forward in a unified way. This would have no negative impact on funding streams;
- this was a scheme that would shape the future and it was important to take time to get it right given the potential detrimental impacts that might otherwise arise as a result;
- those working in the "old town" were best placed to gauge how footfall functioned;
- the city centre economy depended on people coming in to Inverness and it was feared that this proposal might discourage that;
- it was important to re-engage with BID and residents, and that discussions take place with Sustrans regarding their funding and possible alternative modes of transport, such as electric buses, Park and Ride etc, being put in place before closing off roads to private traffic;
- the ambiance of Academy Street could be improved in the short term by increasing cleansing, particularly where travellers left the train and bus stations;
- there was a concern professionals working in Academy Street would move out of town, also taking their clients with them. This would result in period properties becoming vacant and potentially left to deteriorate;
- small independent retailers were not able to relocate to retail parks and, with a possible reduction in footfall, they feared for their livelihoods;

- the concerns of objectors were recognised, the majority being representatives of businesses based in and around Academy Street who feared they would lose business with the proposals pushing customers out of town to the retail parks. These businesses were dependent on customer access and, if they closed, this would have a negative impact on the business rates the Council received. If the proposal moved forward and there was a detrimental impact it could be irreversible;
- the impact on care workers navigating the Academy Street route was highlighted, direct routes being crucial;
- it was questioned if the scheme would reduce pollution as it would involve moving 75% of vehicles to longer routes, doubling fuel use and emissions;
- it was disappointing that cyclists had to share the carriageway with motorised vehicles. The road would be narrower leading to close, and potentially more dangerous, vehicle passes and preventing cyclists from moving up at traffic lights;
- it was contended that the proposals would have a detrimental impact on takeaways and other food businesses;
- it was important to take into account the aging population, who were often excluded from digital processes and had limited access to reliable public transport or appropriate disabled badges. Age fell under Equality Act protection and it was important to examine the plan's impact on older citizens. It did not appear that the Highland Senior Citizens Network Group had been consulted;
- there would be a knock-on effect in the Longman and Crown areas with increased congestion, especially at Crown Primary School and Millburn Academy;
- Academy Street was an important artery in the traffic circulation system of Inverness; and
- in terms of funding, particularly in light of increasing costs, it was queried what confidence there was that the project could be fully funded and whether, if there was a fundamental design change, it would be reported to Committee.

After full debate, Mr I Brown, seconded by Mr C Balance, **MOVED** the recommendations, with an addition, that the Committee, as follows:-

- i. note design progress, which struck a balance between delivering sustainable transport, city centre regeneration and supporting the city centre economy; and
- ii. agree that officers proceed with finalising the proposed design and consult on a Traffic Regulation Order, as explained in Section 10 of the report, including appropriate equalities and economic impact assessments while exploring additional measures to encourage people to travel to the city centre including park and ride and improved public transport and active travel links.

Mr A Christie seconded by Ms H Crawford moved, as an **AMENDMENT**, that the future of Academy Street be progressed in clear stages to determine the best option to implement, as follows:-

Stage 1: That an independent economic impact assessment be commissioned and when complete the findings reported to a special meeting of this committee. Whilst this is underway consultation should take place with businesses, groups, individuals and other interested parties. Additionally further modelling on

displaced traffic and its impact upon areas especially the Crown, Longman and Castle Street be carried out and shared with all stakeholders. This will all allow time for further dialogue and meaningful consultation.

Stage 2: This Committee will consider the economic impact assessment and outcomes of the further consultation and research and decide upon a preferred option for making Academy Street a place for everyone.

Stage 3: That arrangements and actions be initiated to allow a two-month trial period of the preferred option.

Stage 4: The Committee will consider and implement a method/process whereby local people can vote in an advisory style referendum to endorse or not the preferred option.

Stage 5: That officers proceed with finalising the design of the preferred option and commence consultation on the required Traffic Regulation Order.

On a vote being taken, there were 12 votes for the motion and 10 for the amendment, with no abstentions. The **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

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

For the Amendment:

Mr C Aitkin, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson, Mr A Sinclair.

Decision

The Committee:-

**Notice of
Amendment**

- i. **NOTED** design progress, which struck a balance between delivering sustainable transport, city centre regeneration and supporting the city centre economy; and
- ii. **AGREED** that officers proceed with finalising the proposed design and consult on a Traffic Regulation Order, as explained in Section 10 of the report including appropriate equalities and economic impact assessments while exploring additional measures to encourage people to travel to the city centre including park and ride and improved public transport and active travel links.

**7. 2023/24 Annual Report on Inverness Business Improvement District
Aithisg Bhliadhna 2023/24 mu Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis**

Mr A Christie made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and a Board Member of Inverness BID. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA22/23 dated 17 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. The report highlighted the many benefits the Business Improvement District (BID) brought to the City of Inverness and the successful partnership projects that the Council and BID worked on and this was commended by Members.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- BID had received approximately £100k annually over the last few years from the Inverness Common Good Fund and it was queried what discussions there had been with BID on them becoming less reliant on Council funding and their targets to achieve this. It was advised that BID was supported in their efforts to receive third party funding and it was recognised that they had relied on Common Good Funding for some time. The Inverness City Area Manager would discuss this matter with BID;
- the Gull population in Inverness was a concern for businesses and they were asking for funds to be given to BID for a different approach to Gull control. It was advised that officers continued to look at and develop options for Gull control in consultation with NatureScot and the BID Manager. New ways of working on this issue were being monitored such as the use of ultrasonic devices. Also, a detailed update was provided to Members at the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee when applications for Gull control were submitted. In terms of expanding the Gull control project outwith the City Centre, this was challenging as the Council had a passive policy on this matter and would give advice but not undertake management of Gull programmes. How to better inform the public not to feed Gulls was queried;
- the BID security team was welcomed for enhancing security in the town centre;
- the value of the coach friendly project was highlighted.
- the Events and Festivals Working Group would welcome the opportunity to work with BID to make events happen in the City;
- the assistance from BID in promoting the Inverness Highland Games was acknowledged;
- although suggested, it was confirmed that the move to encourage coaches to use more environmentally friendly fuels was not a responsibility of BID;
- discussions could be held about extending the BID district;
- funding needed to be provided to ensure CCTV systems were working and were as effective as possible; and
- BID officers would be invited to give Members a briefing on their future annual reports.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to endorse the work detailed in the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** the ongoing development of partnership working in the key areas identified.

8. **Winter Service Plan for 2023/24** **Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and

any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/23/23 dated 4 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- Members expressed concern that, with only one gully emptying machine currently available, water was not able to effectively drain away and it was hoped that the second machine could be actively pursued. Members were aware of the considerable amount of green vegetation now growing in gullies. It was important too to liaise with Scottish Water;
- the reasons for the use of quad bikes spraying weedkiller at nights were explained;
- there had been a significant overspend on winter maintenance in 2022/23 and the reasons for this were sought;
- it was disappointing that there was a delay in installing and filling grit bins. In this regard, it was suggested scoops could be included but it was explained that this had been tried previously and had been unsuccessful;
- it was important to point out that only a small amount of grit was required on icy surfaces;
- in response to a query it was confirmed that the grit bin map was up-to-date;
- ideally there would be closer collaboration with Bear Scotland;
- in response to a query it was confirmed that the responsibility for gritting footways on the A82, predominantly in Drumnadrochit and Fort Augustus, was the responsibility of Bear Scotland;
- it was important to explain to the public that the gritting teams could not cover all areas at the same time; and
- Members asked that their appreciation of the tremendous work carried out by the Winter Maintenance team be conveyed.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24.

9. Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 5 June 2023:-

- **Ward 12**
 - Dopamine Dolls – Outreach & Awareness - £300
- **Ward 13**
 - Highland Rugby Club – U16 Legacy Rugby Tour of Italy October 2023 - £810
 - Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Development – Free Football – Inverness High School - £169
- **Ward 14**
 - South Kessock & Merkinch Community Action Group - Summer Fun Day Engagement Event - £1,000
 - Merkinch Partnership – Maintenance of Defibrillators - £750

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- Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Development – Free Football – Inverness High School - £338
- Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis – Trim Trail - £604
- South Kessock Residents Association – Lawn Mower & Strimmer - £468

- **Ward 15**
 - 27th Inverness Brownies – Holm Primary Hire -£936.20
 - Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis – Trim Trail - £2,416

- **Ward 16**
 - Highland Rugby Club – U16 Legacy Rugby Tour of Italy October 2023 - £810

- **Ward 17**
 - Highland Rugby Club – U16 Legacy Rugby Tour of Italy October 2023 - £1,350
 - Ardersier Community Hub – Ardersier Christmas Lights - £2,000

- **Ward 19**
 - No Spend

10. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

a) Financial Monitoring Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/24/23 dated 16 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

On the point being raised, it was confirmed that officers were in negotiations with the Inverness Castle project team regarding compensation for the majority of the Town House car park being taken over for the Energy Centre. An assurance was provided that compensation would be calculated on a best value basis, the interests of the Inverness Common Good Fund would be protected, and the outcome of negotiations would be reported back to Members.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 30 June 2023 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets excepting the estimated outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the continued use of Inverness Town House by Police Scotland as detailed within paragraph 6.6 of the report.

b) Grants Applications over £10,000 Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/25/23 dated 14 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. In this connection, there had been circulated separately, as Booklet A, a copy of supporting documentation.

1. D C Thomson & Company Limited

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The Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee had recommended approval of a grant of £15,000 subject to clarity on the difference the grant would make and confirmation that the City would benefit directly from it, and the Inverness City Area Manager provided additional information in that regard.

One Member expressed opposition to the application, commenting that it was a profit-making event that would proceed whether or not a grant was awarded. The Inverness Common Good Fund was for the benefit of the people of Inverness and, in a time of economic hardship, it was considered that the event ought not to be a priority.

However, with all but one Member being supportive of the application, the Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £15,000 from the City Vibrancy budget.

2. Bishop's Road Lighting

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £12,175 from the Other Properties budget.

3. Whin Park

The Committee **AGREED** to defer consideration of this application to the next meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee scheduled to take place on 20 November 2023.

4. The Highland Council - Rose Window into Inverness Castle

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £9,500 from the Other Properties budget.

c) Events and Festivals Working Group Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidheann-obrach Thachartasan is Fhèisean

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/26/23 dated 18 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the report indicated that there were no climate change implications. However, the Bonfire and Fireworks event had a climate impact and other events might have too. The Inverness City Area Manager confirmed that this would be taken into account in future reports;
- the proposal to charge for entry to the Red Hot Highland Fling event was welcomed, and it was commented that the pricing model should not be subsidised by the Common Good Fund;
- support was expressed for maintaining free entry to the Bonfire and Fireworks event and the Christmas Lights Switch-on, which were primarily for young children;
- it was suggested that Halloween was more culturally significant in Highland than Bonfire Night;
- the Chair of the Events and Festivals Working Group spoke to the success of the Inverness Highland Games held at Bught Park on 15 July 2023. Locals and tourists had thoroughly enjoyed the expanded outfield, the Games had attracted the highest ever number of female athletes in the track and field

events, and the newly created Highland Games Ceilidh had ended the day in traditional Highland style. One-off costs amounting to £10,347 included a new website design, banners, entry tickets and One World Rental to facilitate card payments. As Members were aware, the Events and Festivals budget had been reduced by almost 50% this year. However, funds had been raised through sponsorship for the Inverness Highland Games and sponsorship would also be sought for the remaining events. It was disappointing that the Events and Festivals Working Group was not in a position to prioritise a Halloween event. However, it was understood that there would be an independent Halloween event on the riverside. In relation to the Red Hot Highland Fling event, it was emphasised that the Events and Festivals Working Group had a track record of delivering first-class Hogmanay events since 2008. The Inverness event would be one of only two Hogmanay events being held in Scotland this year and, knowing how important the event was, not only to local communities but to tourists and the local economy, a minimal entry charge was proposed to enable a high-quality event to be delivered. She expressed thanks to the Members of the Events and Festivals Working Group for their vision, hard work and dedication, and to Kim Rait of Black Orchid Events, newly appointed Events Manager, who had skilfully delivered the Highland Games; and

- information was sought, and provided, on the number of people that had attended the Red Hot Highland Fling event in previous years when it had not been ticketed in comparison with 2022 when the decision had been taken to make it a ticketed event. Members were assured that officers were working to ensure capacity was maximised whilst meeting health and safety requirements.

The Committee **AGREED** to the Events and Festivals Working Group having the delegated power to extend charging for entry to the Red Hot Highland Fling event within the community events programme set by the Working Group, noting the attendant risk to events being delivered within the allocated budget.

**d) Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) Annual Report 2022/23
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis 2022/23**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Board Member of Inverness BID. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/27/23 dated 17 July 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In introducing the report, noting the position with Community Regeneration Funding and the success of applying the work to the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee to date, the Inverness City Area Manager suggested that recommendation ii. of the report be amended as follows:-

“agree that powers delegated to the ICGF Sub-Committee in respect of Community Regeneration Funding be amended to include:-

- a) expressions of interest and the selection of projects that should proceed to full application;
- b) full applications for funding; and

- c) to make a recommendation to the next City of Inverness Area Committee on the selection of projects for approval and the value of grants to be made.”

The Chair of the ICGF Sub-Committee commented that the report gave an indication of the range of activities that came under the ICGF, adding that Inverness was fortunate to have a large Common Good Fund that enabled good causes to be supported. He expressed thanks to all those involved in the administration of the ICGF and its large property portfolio, as well as to Members of the ICGF Sub-Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** and scrutinised the work of the ICGF Sub-Committee as described within the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that powers delegated to the ICGF Sub-Committee in respect of the Community Regeneration Funding be amended to include:-
 - a) expressions of interest and the selection of projects that should proceed to full application;
 - b) full applications for funding; and
 - c) to make a recommendation to the next City of Inverness Area Committee on the selection of projects for approval and the value of grants to be made.

11. Appointment to Sub-Committee, Working Groups etc Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidh, Buidhnean Obrach is eile

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr I Brown to the Community Events and Festivals Working Group to replace Mrs M Reid.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

Mr A Christie made Transparency Statement in respect of item 12 (ii) and 12 (iii) in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The following Minutes were circulated for noting or approval as appropriate:-

- i. **NOTED** the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 5 June 2023);
- ii. **APPROVED** the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 25 May 2023, 16 June 2023, 3 July 2023, and 7 August 2023; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 12 June 2023 and 7 August 2023.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 30 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (Remote)	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Mr I Brown	Mr C Munro
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Ms M Nolan (Remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mrs M Paterson
Mr J Grafton (Remote)	Mr R Stewart (Remote)
Mr P Logue (Remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Finlayson

In attendance:

Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal and Governance
 Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
 Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
 Ms M Mulholland, Community Learning and Development Officer
 Ms J MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer (Remote)
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
 Miss R Ross, Committee Officer

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

Mr C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms L Niven.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

3. Good News

With Members having highlighted specific achievements, the Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- Gaelic probationer teachers were welcomed to schools across the Highlands, a record number having taken up posts;
- funding had been received from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Gaelic Language Plan Fund. This funding would assist with Gaelic extra-curricular activities and project development including 0-3;
- the Blas Festival was due to take place on 1-9 September with a great programme of events in venues across the Highlands

- the Gaelic tutor training which took place in Inverness had been well received by all who attended;
- Members were pleased to see such an extensive Gaelic Summer Activities Programme;
- the Làithean Cultair – Culture Days in Kilmuir and Staffin schools were a success;
- FC Sonas football activities and events had been well attended and the young people enjoyed participating and using their linguistic skills; and
- the Gaelic Team worked very closely with organisations including High Life Highland, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, An Comunn, Fèis Rois, community groups and trusts, Spòrs Gàidhlig, FC Sonas, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comunn na Gàidhlig, Skills Development Scotland, Ainmean Àite na h-Alba, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, SQA and many more organisations. This was to be commended.

4. Presentation - Ainmean Àite na h-Alba

Ms Eilidh Scammell, Manager of at Ainmean Àite na h-Alba (AÀA), gave a presentation to the Committee on how the Gaelic Place Names partnership was working to support the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan. She explained the role of AÀA and its origins, aims, funding and projects underway.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Highland Council was doing a power of work to promote Gaelic;
- Gaelic place names were key to Highland's heritage and history and often gave an insight to what might have taken place there in the past;
- AÀA database of 4,774 place names demonstrated the huge degree of research it had carried out;
- an example was provided where the introduction of Gaelic to street names had kicked off a resurgence in bilingualism and it was hoped, in consultation with Local Members, this could be replicated elsewhere;
- people would not tolerate signs being mis-spelt in English so it was not acceptable for them to be mis-spelt in Gaelic. Mis-spelt signs attracted negative publicity;
- if Gaelic place names were dispensed with, people would soon forget the bilingual nature of the area and, in many cases, Gaelic had been the first language;
- the use of Gaelic place names also showed respect to Gaelic speakers;
- having Gaelic on signs and maps raised the visibility of the language.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Gaelic Translation

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

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the Gaelic Translation Service, which is managed by a sole translation officer, was thanked for the considerable amount of work achieved;
- it was suggested that Members, particularly when communicating with external organisations, could use bilingual electronic signatures to highlight the language;

- Highland Council needed to be compliant with its own bilingual policy and it was important that there was consistency across the board;
- it was recognised that there were financial constraints but the possibility of simultaneous translation at Gaelic Committees was encouraged. There were challenges to this however insofar as how to provide a translation to those participating remotely;
- the Gaelic Translation Service provided by the Council and the Council's bilingual policy should be reinforced across services and developers and contractors in particular should be made aware and/or reminded that the use of Google Translate for signage was unacceptable due to the potential for mistakes to be made; and
- Gaelic place-names are determined in consultation with AÀA, with an awareness of the importance of preserving local dialectal forms where possible.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work that has been undertaken in relation to Gaelic translation; and
- ii. the areas of current and future development.

6. Performance against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/23 dated 8 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the increase in pupil numbers was to be welcomed but it was feared that the shortage of Gaelic speaking education staff could have a detrimental impact on this, especially with an increasing demand for Gaelic Medium teachers in the Central Belt. However, Highland had taken a successful "grow your own" approach and, in partnership with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, had successfully increased the number of probationers in Highland; and
- Gaelic provided opportunities for young people and it was important to show the benefits of bilingualism. A recent visit of young people to Donegal, Ireland had demonstrated to them that other areas, including Wales, were promoting and investing in indigenous languages. Bilingualism provided young people with real life skills.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Gaelic Education

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/23 dated 8 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the increase in demand for Gaelic Medium Education in Dingwall was applauded and the new Head Teacher was keen to promote it;
- the report highlighted the importance of how Highland Council was supporting the Scottish Government aim what they wanted to achieve through the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act, especially through Gaelic Medium Education. It was important to highlight this to Education Scotland and the Scottish Government in order Highland Council received the support required to sustain and strengthen this;

- there were challenges in the ability to provide teachers in every area where there was a demand for Gaelic Medium Education, not just in the traditional Gaelic speaking areas;
- there were limitations when pupils reached secondary schools and many felt there was no option to continue with their Gaelic studies and some would leave with no Gaelic Higher qualification, not only a loss to the individual but to the Gaelic speaking community. Reference was made to the low numbers who had sat Higher Gaelic, given the much larger number who had been in Gaelic. However, others pointed out that Gaelic Medium Education was much more about a holistic approach to language immersion than academia and that Gaelic Medium Education was also there to support Gaelic as a language of the community; and
- there were potential difficulties in providing Gaelic Medium environments as numbers grew.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the update on the Inverness 3-18 Gaelic Education Feasibility Study;
- ii. the current position of the Applecross Gaelic Medium Education request; and
- iii. the catchment consultation process and update for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall and Nairn Gaelic Medium provisions.

8. Gaelic Provision and Support – Birth to 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/17/23 dated 2 August 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- birth to 3 is a very important sector that was often overlooked;
- the 25% decrease in the number of children under 1 year of age could lead to problems across Highland;
- exposure to Gaelic in the early years of life was incredibly important and could have many positive effects throughout life including making it easier to learn other languages in the future; and
- information was sought and provided on which areas were seeing an increased demand for 0-3 Gaelic services.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to invite the author/s of the national research report on the Birth to Three Sector and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to a future Gaelic Committee

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm.

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Geàrr-chunntas coinneamh **Comataidh na Gàidhlig** a chumadh ann an Seòmar na Comhairle, Prìomh Oifis na Comhairle, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis air Diciadain 30 Lùnastal 2023 aig 10.30m.

An làthair:

Mgr C Aitken (air astar)

Mgr R Bremner

Mgr I MacIleDhuinn

A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul (air astar)

A' Bh-uas S Fanet

Mgr I Grafton (air astar)

Mgr P Logue (air astar)

Mgr U MacAoidh (air astar)

Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir (air astar)

Mgr C Rothach

A' Bh-uas M Nolan (air astar)

A' Bh-uas M NicPheadrais

Mgr R Stiùbhart (air astar)

Neo-bhuill cuideachd an làthair:

Mgr I MacFhionnlaigh

A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr S Friseal, Ceannard Laghail agus Riaghlachais

A' Bh-uas L Walker, Manaidsear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas M A NicLeòid Mitchell, Oifigear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas M Mulholland, Oifigear Ionnsachadh is Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd

A' Bh-uas Jo NicDhòmhnaill, Prìomh Oifigear Eadar-theangachaidh (air astar)

A' Bh-uas S NicIlinnein, Manaidsear Cho-Sheirbheisean Deamocratach

A' Bh-uas R Ros, Oifigear Comataidh

Tha rionnag air iomall na duilleige a' comharrachadh moladh a thèid chun na Comhairle. Tha co-dhùnidhean gun chomharra fo ùghdarras na Comataidh.

Mgr C Rothach anns a' Chathair**Gnothach****1. Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Ghabhadh leisgeul às leth na M-uas L Niven.

2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

Cha robh Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithrisean Follaiseachd sam bith ann.

3. Naidheachdan Matha

Às dèidh do Bhuill coileanaidhean sònraichte fa leth a chomharrachadh, thug an Cathraiche seachad na naidheachdan matha a leanas:-

- chaidh fàilte a chur air tidsearan pròbhaidh Gàidhlig gu sgoiltean air feadh na Gàidhealtachd agus barrachd ann am-bliadhna na bha riamh roimhe;

- chaidh maoin eachadh fhaighinn bho Mhaoin Phlanaichean Gàidhlig Bhòrd na Gàidhlig. Bhiodh am maoin eachadh seo na chuideachadh le cleasan neo-churraicealach Gàidhlig agus le bhith a' leasachadh phròiseactan, a' gabhail a-steach Breith gu Trì;
- bha Fèis Blas gu bhith a' dol air adhart bhon 1–9 Sultain le prògram sgoinneil de thachartasan ann an grunn àiteachan air feadh na Gàidhealtachd;
- chaidh trèanadh oidean Gàidhlig a chumail ann an Inbhir Nis o chionn ghoirid agus chòrd seo gu mòr ris na bha an làthair;
- bha Buill toilichte faicinn gun deach Prògram Chleasan Samhraidh cho farsaing a chumail am-bliadhna;
- chaidh Làithean Cultair a chumail ann an sgoiltean Chille Mhoire agus Stafainn agus bha iad soirbheachail dha-rìribh;
- bha mòran dhaoine òga an làthair aig cleasan is tachartasan FC Sonas agus chòrd e glan riutha pàirt a ghabhail sa bhall-choise agus na sgilean cànan aca a chleachdadh cuideachd; agus
- bha Sgioba na Gàidhlig ag obair gu dlùth le grunn bhuidhnean a leithid High Life na Gàidhealtachd, Fèisean nan Gàidheal, An Comunn Gàidhealach, Fèis Rois, buidhnean is urrasan coimhearsnachd, Spòrs Gàidhlig, FC Sonas, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comunn na Gàidhlig, Leasachadh Sgilean na h-Alba, Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba, Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Ùghdarras Theisteanas na h-Alba agus mòran eile. Bha seo ri mholadh.

4. Taisbeanadh – Ainmean Àite na h-Alba

Thug a' Bh-uas Eilidh Scammell, Manaidsear Ainmean Àite na h-Alba (AÀA), seachad taisbeanadh dhan Chomataidh mun dòigh sa bheil com-pàirteachas Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba ag obrachadh gus taic a chur ri Plana Gàidhlig Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd. Mhìnich i dreuchd AÀA, mar a thòisich e, na h-amasan aige, maoin eachadh, agus pròiseactan a tha a' dol air adhart.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingeann a leanas:-

- bha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' dèanamh obair mhòr gus a' Ghàidhlig a chur air adhart;
- bha ainmean-àite Gàidhlig bunaiteach a thaobh dualchas is eachdraidh na Gàidhealtachd agus bha iad tric a' toirt sealladh air na dh'fhaodadh a bhith air gabhail àite an sin san àm a dh'fhalbh;
- bha 4,774 ainm-àite ann an stòr-dàta AÀA, a' sealltainn gun deach rannsachadh farsaing a dhèanamh;
- chaidh eisimpleir a thoirt seachad far an robh ainmean-sràide Gàidhlig air ùidh a thogail ann an dà-chànanas agus bhathar an dòchas, ann an co-chomhairleachadh le buill ionadail, gum faodadh seo tachairt ann an àiteachan eile;
- cha ghabhadh daoine ri soidhnichean Beurla le litreachadh ceàrr agus mar sin cha robh e iomchaidh gum biodh iad air an litreachadh ceàrr sa Ghàidhlig. Bha soidhnichean le mearachdan a' tarraing aire agus a' togail mì-chliù;
- nan deigheadh cur às do dh'ainmean-àite Gàidhlig, cha bhiodh e fada gus an dìochuimhnicheadh daoine mu dhà-chànanas na sgìre agus, ann an iomadh cùis, bha a' Ghàidhlig air a bhith ann an toiseach;
- bha a bhith a' cleachdadh ainmean-àite Gàidhlig a' sealltainn spèis do luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig; agus
- bha làthaireachd na Gàidhlig air soidhnichean is mapaichean a' dèanamh a' chànan nas follaisiche.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan taisbeanadh.

5. Eadar-theangachadh Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/14/23 le ceann-latha 14 Lùnastal 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghniomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- chaidh taing a thoirt do Sheirbheis Eadar-theangachaidh na Gàidhlig, a tha air a ruith le aon oifigear eadar-theangachaidh, airson na chaidh a choileanadh de dh'obair;
- chaidh moladh gum faodadh Buill ainmean-sgrìobhte dealanach Gàidhlig a chleachdadh gus an cànan a thoirt am follais, gu h-àraid nuair a bhathar a' dèiligeadh ri buidhnean air an taobh a-muigh;
- bu chòir do Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd air fad cumail ris a' phoileasaidh dà-chànanach aice fhèin agus bha e cudromach gun robh cùisean cunbhalach anns gach raon;
- chaidh aithneachadh gum faodadh cuingealachaidhean ionmhasail a bhith ann ach chaidh togail gum bu chòir eadar-theangachadh mar aon a chur air adhart aig na Comataidhean Gàidhlig. Bha dùbhlain an cois seo a thaobh a bhith a' solarachadh eadar-theangachadh dhaibhsan a bha a' gabhail pàirt air astar;
- bu chòir Seirbheis Eadar-theangachaidh na Gàidhlig agus poileasaidh dà-chànanach na Comhairle a bhith air an neartachadh thar nan seirbheisean, agus bu chòir innse do luchd-leasachaidh is cunnradairan agus/no cur nan cuimhne nach robh e idir freagarrach eadar-theangachadh Google a chleachdadh seach gun robh mearachdan buailteach tighinn am bàrr; agus
- bha ainmean-àite Gàidhlig air an dearbhadh ann an co-chomhairleachadh le AÀA, le aire do cho cudromach 's a tha e a bhith a' gleidheadh dhual-chainntean ionadail far am b' urrainnear.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. dhan obair a chaidh a dhèanamh a thaobh eadar-theangachadh Gàidhlig; agus
- ii. dha na leasachaidhean a tha a' gabhail àite an-dràsta agus dhan fheadhainn a tha san amharc.

6. Coileanadh mu Choinneimh Plana na Gàidhlig 3

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/16/23 le ceann-latha 8 Lùnastal 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghniomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- bhathar a' cur fàilte air an àrdachadh ann an àireamhan sgoilearan ach bha eagal ann gum faodadh gainnead luchd-obrach foghlaim Gàidhlig droch bhuaidh a thoirt air a seo, gu h-àraid le iarrtas a' fàs airson tidsearan FtG ann am meadhan na h-Alba. Ach bha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, ann an com-pàirteachas le Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, air a dhol an lùib dòigh-obrach shoirbheachail gus an àireamh thidsearan pròbhaidh sa Ghàidhealtachd a mheudachadh; agus
- bha a' Ghàidhlig a' toirt chothrom do dhaoine òga agus bha e cudromach buannachdan dà-chànanais a shealltainn. Bha daoine òga air tadhal air Dùn nan Gall ann an Èirinn o chionn ghoirid agus bha seo air sealltainn dhaibh gun robh àiteachan eile a leithid seo, agus a' Chuimrigh, a' brosnachadh is a'

tasgadh ann an cànanan dùthchasach. Bha dà-chànanas a' toirt sgilean beatha cudromach do dhaoine òga.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg.

7. Foghlam Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/16/23 le ceann-latha 8 Lùnastal 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air an àrdachadh ann an iarrtas airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig (FtG) ann an Inbhir Pheofharain agus bha an Ceannard ùr airson a bhrosnachadh;
- thug an aithisg am follais mar a bha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd a' toirt taic do dh'amas Riaghaltas na h-Alba a thaobh na bha iad airson a choileanadh tro Achd na Gàidhlig (Alba), gu h-àraid tro FtG. Bha e cudromach seo a thoirt am follais do dh'Fhoghlam Alba agus Riaghaltas na h-Alba gus am faigheadh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd an taic a bha a dhìth gus seo a chumail suas is a neartachadh;
- bha dùbhlain ann a thaobh comas tidsearan a sholarachadh anns gach sgìre far an robh iarrtas airson FtG, chan ann a-mhàin sna sgìrean anns an robhar a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig gu traidiseanta;
- bha cuingealachaidhean ann nuair a bha sgoilearan a' ruigsinn àrd-sgoiltean agus bha mòran a' faireachdainn nach robh roghainn ann cumail a' dol len cuid sgoilearachd Gàidhlig agus dh'fhàgadh cuid às aonais teisteanas Àrd-Ìre Gàidhlig. Cha b' e a-mhàin gun robh seo na chall dhan neach fhèin, ach cuideachd do choimhearsnachd na Gàidhlig.
- chaidh iomradh a thoirt air na h-àireamhan ìosal a bha air Àrd-Ìre Gàidhlig a shuidhe, gu h-àraid seach gun robh àireamh fada na bu mhotha air a bhith a' dèanamh Gàidhlig. Ach, thog feadhainn eile gun robh FtG barrachd mu dheidhinn dòigh-obrach iomlanach a thaobh bogadh cànan seach sgoilearachd agus gun robh FtG ann cuideachd gus taic a thoirt dhan Ghàidhlig mar chànan na coimhearsnachd; agus
- dh'fhaodadh duilgheadasan a bhith ann a thaobh a bhith a' solarachadh àrainneachdan FtG mar a bha àireamhan a' fàs.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. dhan chunntas às ùr a thaobh Sgrùdadh So-dhèantachd Foghlam Gàidhlig 3–18 Inbhir Nis;
- ii. dhan t-suidheachadh làithreach mun iarrtas airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson na Comraich; agus
- iii. dhan phròiseas cho-chomhairleachaidh agus dhan chunntas às ùr a thaobh solar Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Inbhir Pheofharain agus Inbhir Narann.

8. Solar agus Taic dhan Ghàidhlig – Breith gu Trì

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/17/23 le ceann-latha 2 Lùnastal 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- 's e roinn fìor chudromach a th' ann am breith gu trì agus cha robhar an-còmhnaidh a' toirt aire gu leòr dhi;
- dh'fhaodadh an lùghdachadh 25% san àireimh chloinne fo aois 1 bhliadhna duilgheadasan adhbharachadh air feadh na Gàidhealtachd;
- bha e fìor chudromach gum biodh cothrom aig cloinn a bhith an lùib na Gàidhlig sna bliadhnaichean tràtha agus dh'fhaodadh seo a bhith buannachdail dhaibh trom beathannan air fad, a' ciallachadh gum biodh e na b' fhasa cànanan eile ionnsachadh san àm ri teachd; agus
- chaidh fiosrachadh a shireadh agus a thoirt seachad mu na raointean a bha a' faicinn iarrtas a' fàs airson seirbheisean Gàidhlig 0–3.

Às dèidh sin:-

- i. **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg; agus
- ii. **DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh gun deigheadh cuireadh a thoirt do dh'ùghdar/an na h-aithisg rannsachaidh nàiseanta air Roinn Breith gu Trì agus Bòrd na Gàidhlig tighinn gu coinneamh Chomataidh na Gàidhlig san àm ri teachd.

Chrìochnaich a' choinneamh aig 12.20 f.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 31 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)	Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Mr J Bruce	Mr P Logue
Mr M Cameron (remote)	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr J Finlayson	Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr L Fraser (remote)	Ms J McEwan (substitute) (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Mr R Gunn	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mrs J Hendry	Ms M Nolan (remote)

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr C Ballance (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr S Kennedy	Mr D Millar (remote)
Ms L Kraft (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Ms K MacLean (remote)	Mr M Reiss (remote)

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
 Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement
 Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations
 Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services
 Mr A Hunter, Service Lead – Transport and Logistics
 Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager
 Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent R Shepherd, Police Scotland
 Sergeant D Jack, Police Scotland

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms T Collier, Mr A Graham and Mr M Green.

2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Item 5: Mr R Gale, Mr D Macpherson and Mr D Millar

3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

4. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

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

- Kyle MacKay, Environmental Health Technical Officer, had successfully completed a modern apprenticeship route to gain an HNC in the Built Environment from UHI Inverness. Kyle was based in Drummie and covered private sector housing duties including housing grants for adaptations and repairs.
- Isla MacKintosh, based in Wick, had passed her professional qualifications in Animal Health and Welfare and would now be undertaking the full duties of an Animal Health and Welfare Officer in the area.
- As Members were aware, the Service did a lot of work to support communities with the upkeep of war memorials. The effort put in by communities and the teams from Communities and Place was recognised and appreciated by the Royal British Legion Scotland. This had been noted recently in the 2023 Highlands and Islands War Memorial Awards with winners in their specific categories for Dingwall, Fort William and Golspie and a special commendation for the war memorial in Ardgay. Thanks were expressed to the teams from Amenities, Waste and Street Cleaning, and Bereavement Services.
- The Public Conveniences team had been shortlisted as finalists in the APSE Service Awards. These awards were extremely competitive with over 300 submissions from across the UK. The winner would be announced at the APSE Annual Seminar on 14 September 2023.
- Continuing with the theme of Public Conveniences, the Glencoe facility had been successfully refurbished. This had been a major project to upgrade the site to offer more modern facilities with the inclusion of disabled access, installation of energy efficient solutions and new baby changing facilities. This had been part of the wider Glencoe Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund project and had opened in June in time for the busy summer tourist season.
- Stores Modern Apprentice, Kevin Martin, Inverness, had recently gained his qualification in Logistics Operations in Stores and had passed his driving test first time on 7 August 2023.
- The Cost of Living Support Fund had been successful in winning the Resilient and Sustainable Communities section at the Highland Council Staff Recognition Awards in June. Members would recall how well received this fund had been by

communities and what it had been able to achieve, and the recognition was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

5. Police Area Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Poileis

Transparency Statements: Mr R Gale, Mr D Macpherson and Mr D Millar made Transparency Statements in respect of this item on the basis that a family member was a serving Police Officer. However, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/23 dated 18/08/23 by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland.

The Chair highlighted that, whilst the recommendation asked the Committee to note the report, Members had a scrutiny role and were therefore asked to comment on and scrutinise the report.

Chief Superintendent Shepherd provided a brief operational update, drawing attention to the loss of 9 policing posts due to Police Scotland budget cuts; the reduction in the overtime budget; the high number of assaults on police officers in Highland compared to the rest of Scotland and what was being done to combat this, including the upcoming introduction of body-worn video; the success of the Highland Cops documentary; the strength of recruitment in the Highland area; the reduction in dropped 101 calls; and the relatively high level of public confidence in the police compared to elsewhere in Scotland.

He went on to highlight several key areas of the report including the number of road deaths; drink and drug driving offences; violent crimes; online fraud; shoplifting; missing people and County Lines activity. Thanks were expressed to the public for their help in locating several missing persons reported on social media.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the high number of assaults on police officers was troubling and not to be tolerated, and it was hoped the introduction of body cameras would help with this issue;
- the exercise that had taken place in Wick to measure community confidence in and interaction with the police force had highlighted that the community would like a greater police presence, including attendance at events such as county shows. However, with the loss of officers due to budget cuts it was recognised that this would be difficult;
- information was sought, and provided, on the possibility of losing the Operational Support Unit in Inverness due to budget cuts;
- officers working alone in remote locations were very vulnerable and the reduction in officer numbers could lead to officers having to attend serious incidents with no back-up;
- the closure of care homes in smaller towns could impact on the number of missing Looked After Children as they would be harder to find in cities;

- information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the high numbers of missing children, whether conditions such as dementia were contributing to the number of missing adults and the steps being taken to combat these issues;
- information was sought, and provided, on how mobile phone driving offences were detected and what could be done to reduce the number of offences, and it was confirmed that the decrease in speeding convictions was possibly due to officers focussing on different areas such as detecting mobile phone and drug offences;
- the conviction rate for assaults on police officers was queried and information was sought as to how the police and the judicial system were working together to ensure that more detections led to convictions;
- it was important to consider community involvement, co-location and inter-agency working, and an invitation was extended to Chief Superintendent Shepherd to visit Skye to discuss proposals in that regard;
- information was sought, and provided, on the ways in which Police Scotland was working with NHS Highland to deal with the high level of calls relating to people with mental illness;
- concern was expressed regarding some Police Station offices being open infrequently;
- information was sought on the number of road traffic fatalities and collisions in the Skye and Raasay area and the Chief Superintendent undertook to ensure that this would be reported to the Skye and Raasay Area Committee;
- thanks were extended to the officers who had policed the Scottish Independence March across the Skye Bridge;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the geography of the Highlands led to different challenges than in the rest of Scotland; and
- it having been queried where the equipment for scanning road accident scenes was located, the Chief Superintendent undertook to investigate and advise Members accordingly.

Mr R Gunn moved that Members show support for the Police Scotland North Division and, in recognition of the impossible demands expected of them in the light of the Scottish Government cuts, leading to a reduction of 27 Officers and a 50% cut in overtime budget, call upon the Chair of the Communities and Place Committee to write to the Scottish Government in the strongest possible terms calling for an increase in funding to ensure that there were no cuts to service in the Highlands.

However, it was explained that Standing Order 34 applied, a decision having been taken at Full Council on 9 March 2023 that the Leader of the Council would write to the First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Justice requesting an urgent review of Police Scotland resources in the Highlands.

Mr R Gunn therefore withdrew his motion and the Chair undertook to liaise with the Leader of the Council to ascertain what the response had been to the letter and arrange for it to be circulated to Members.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2022 - 31 March 2023.

6. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 22/23 Outturn & 23/24 Quarter 1 and Service Performance Reporting for 2022/23 Suim Dheireannach Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach 22/23 & Aithris Cairteil 1 23/24 agus Coileanadh Seirbheis airson 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/23 dated 11 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on what steps could be taken to improve performance in terms of the number of complaints resolved within 20 days; the resource allocated to dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI) requests; and possible ways of decreasing the number of FOIs such as providing more information on the Council website or via the Council's Publication Scheme.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Service's revenue monitoring position; and
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service's performance and risk information.

7. Capital Monitoring – Quarter 4 2022/23 and Quarter 1 2023/24 Aithisg Sgrùdadh Buidseat Calpa: Suim Dheireannach 22/23 agus Cairteil 1 23/24

There had been circulated Report No CP/19/23 dated 7 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

On the point being raised, it was confirmed that in the case of an underspend due to slippage the funding would be carried forward. In addition, in relation to paragraph 5.6 of the report, information was sought, and provided, on the procurement process, including opportunities for local businesses.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the capital outturn position for the Communities and Place Service for 2022/23;
- ii. the forecasted capital outturn for the Communities and Place Service for 2023/24 as at Quarter 1; and
- iii. the current forecast for the major project for the Communities and Place Service for 2023/24.

8. Communities and Place Service Plan Update 2023/24 Cunntas às Ùr mu Phlana na Seirbheis Coimhearsnachd agus Àite 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CP/20/23 dated 9 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the following matters:-

- progress in respect of inspection and sampling of high-risk water supplies and the development of a business case in relation to sampling private water supplies;
- whether there were any plans to roll out food waste collections beyond Inverness;
- public convenience provision, with particular reference to the lack of provision for people travelling from north Highland to Inverness;

- street cleaning, which it was commented could be more efficient, particularly in terms of clearing gullies which would help to prevent flooding;
- whether there were any resources available to support local communities to develop their own Place Plans;
- whether the Energy from Waste (EfW) feasibility study would take account of the Church Report on future incineration capacity and if, given the lack of capital funding, money would be better spent on reducing residual waste by increasing the amount of reuse, repair, recycling and upcycling by both residents and visitors. The Executive Chief Officer explained that Members at the Waste Strategy Working Group on 8 August 2023 had received a detailed update on this matter and it was intended to present a report on EfW and related matters to the November Committee.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Service Plan for 2023/24.

9. Approach to Sustainable Business Travel Dòigh-obrach a thaobh Siubhal Gnothachais Seasmhach

There had been circulated Report No CP/21/23 dated 9 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- the comprehensive report was commended, and the financial challenges associated with delivering it were recognised;
- the potential expansion of Car Club to external organisations or the general public at off-peak times presented an exciting opportunity, particularly in remote and rural areas where transport was a significant issue. Further information was sought, and provided, in that regard and it was confirmed that a more detailed position statement could be provided at the next meeting;
- the availability of public electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure was a significant issue, and it was queried whether there were any improvement plans and what support was available from the Scottish and UK Governments. The Head of Community Operations and Logistics undertook to liaise with relevant officers and ask them to respond;
- in relation to Ultra-Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV), it was queried whether the reference to hybrid vehicles included mild hybrids as most of the time they were not driving on electricity;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether new petrol and diesel cars and light commercial vehicles were still being procured; whether training was being provided for efficient driving of EVs; and, in relation to heavy vehicles such as gritters, what the deadline was for moving to ULEVs, how sustainable and efficient they would be and whether government support was available given the significant costs;
- in relation to the Fleet Pathfinder Project and the potential collaboration with private sector partners, information was sought on the effects on service users and who would set the charges for EV charging. The Head of Community Operations and Logistics undertook to request colleagues in procurement to provide a short briefing to Dr C Birt;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that Car Club was available to Members and a link was available on the Council's Intranet or via the Head of Community Operations and Logistics;

- it having been queried how on-call staff would be recompensed for charging EVs at home, it was confirmed that a policy was under development.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** that the report and Action Plan supported the Council's Net Zero Strategy approved at The Highland Council on 29 June 2023;
- NOTED** the contents of the report;
- AGREED** the Sustainable Business Travel Action Plan; and
- NOTED** the annual review of the Action Plan and reporting of progress as outlined at section 7.2 of the report.

10. Waste Management Service Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Sheirbheis Rianachd Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No CP/22/23 dated 10 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- in relation to the imminent ban on upholstered furniture containing Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) being landfilled, information was sought, and provided, on the potential impact on the budget, whether any financial support was available from the Scottish government, the proposals for areas with smaller Household Waste Recycling Centres that could not accept upholstered furniture, and whether an increase in fly-tipping was anticipated; and
- information was sought, and provided, on the carbon impact and cost implications associated with the cessation of landfill at the Seater landfill site;

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- the service response to the imminent ban on upholstered furniture being landfilled;
- the work and progress being made connected to the Recycling Improvement Fund project and that a detailed report including the scheduled and planned rollout would be reported to the Committee in November 2023;
- the updated position on the planned Waste Transfer Station in Fort William; and
- the scope of work and progress on the Nairn Re-Use Feasibility Project.

11. Bereavement Services – Project Updates Seirbheisean Bàis – Cunntasan às Ùr mun Pròiseact

There had been circulated Report No CP/23/23 dated 10 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- The Chair confirmed that if Members wished to take up the offer of visiting Inverness Crematorium that could be arranged, and asked the Bereavement Services Manager to pass on the Committee's thanks and congratulations for the positive outcome of the annual inspection of the crematorium as detailed in the report;

- thanks were expressed for the report, particularly Appendix 2, which set out the status of current burial ground projects and would help Members respond to constituents, and Appendix 4, which showed the burial grounds that were forecasted to reach capacity in the next 10 years. With regard to the latter, it was important that discussions continued with Local Members;
- appreciation was expressed to the Bereavement Services team for their responsiveness to Members' queries and the hard work they did in challenging times;
- it was interesting to note that Skye had the most burial grounds in Highland, and although many were no longer operational it showed how, historically, burial grounds were placed in small communities;
- on the point being raised, an assurance was provided that all burial grounds, whether fully or partially operational or historic, were maintained by the Council's Amenities team. In terms of specific timescales/frequency, the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, undertook to liaise with the Amenities team and revert to Mr J Finlayson;
- in relation to Glen Nevis burial ground, it was questioned whether it should be accepted that a new site was not going to be found and the Council should instead seek to build a crematorium in the area;
- information was sought, and provided, on the procedures in respect of public health funerals. It was suggested that people from rural areas would be expected to be buried in the local cemetery, and the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, confirmed he was happy to discuss specific cases outwith the meeting;
- burial grounds generated a lot of discussion at Community Council meetings and it was queried whether Appendix 4 of the report would be available on the Council's website for communities to refer to going forward;
- thanks were expressed for the first-class maintenance work being carried out by the Amenities teams in Sutherland and Caithness;
- it would be helpful to provide an annual monitoring report on Bereavement Services to Area Committees at Ward level;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether cremation was on the increase and, given the waiting time for slots, whether another crematorium was required in Highland; how many more funerals could be held at Inverness Crematorium if prices were more competitive when compared with crematoriums in neighbouring local authority areas; whether there would be any financial merit in the Council operating a pet cremation service; and whether the cremators that were being replaced had any re-sale value; and
- the re-lining of the car park and re-painting of handrails at Inverness Crematorium was welcomed and would be appreciated by the public.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress of burial ground extensions in Highland;
- ii. **NOTED** the monitoring and governance provided by the Bereavement Services Project Board;
- iii. **NOTED** the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development;
- iv. **NOTED** work had been commissioned to review the options for cremator replacement at Inverness Crematorium and a further update would be provided to Members when the final report was completed;
- v. **NOTED** the range of improvements being undertaken and developed at the Inverness Crematorium; and

- vi. **AGREED** that an annual monitoring report in respect of Bereavement Services be provided to Area Committees including information at Ward level.

12. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2023/24
Aithisg Bhliadhnaì Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CP/24/23 dated 10 August 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

At this stage, the Chair paid tribute to one of the report authors, Pablo Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, who had retired earlier this month. He had worked for the Council and High Life Highland for over 36 years in roles spanning community education, youth work and, latterly, community participation and involvement. He had been a strong advocate for greater community ownership and supporting communities to take forward their own priorities and had been instrumental in designing and implementing the Council's current approach to community asset transfer. On behalf of the Committee, the Chair wished him a long and happy retirement.

During discussion, Members commended officers for their efforts in facilitating community asset transfers. Voluntary organisations made a significant contribution to Highland communities and the more the Council worked with them on the type of projects described in the report the better.

The Committee **AGREED** the annual report on Community Asset Transfer, as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1, for submission to the Scottish Government.

13. Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group
Geàrr-chunntas Buidheann Obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail

The Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 8 August 2023 were **APPROVED**.

The meeting concluded at 2.00 pm.