

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness/Remotely on **Friday 15 September 2023 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr S Kennedy (substitute)
Mr D Louden
Mr P Oldham

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr A Bell, LNCT
Mr M Smith, UNITE/UCATT (substitute)
Ms S Purdie, RCN

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers (**MR**), Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property
Ms E Barrie (**EB**), Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service
Ms G Falconer (**GF**), Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Resources & Finance Service
Mrs A MacPherson (**AMacP**), Education & Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr F MacDonald (**FM**), Property & Housing, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr T Murdison (**TM**), Service Lead, Corporate Property Management, Housing & Property
Mrs F Malcolm (**FMalc**), Health & Social Care, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mr A Yates, Communities & Place, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator
Mrs D Ferguson, Ross, Skye & Lochaber Area (substitute)
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Area
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service

Item No.	<u>SUBJECT/DECISION</u>	Action
1.	Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair	
	<p>Members were advised that, in terms of the remit of the Committee, following an election of councillors, and annually thereafter, the Committee shall appoint from amongst their members a Chair and Vice Chair. If the Chair appointed be one of the Employer's representatives, the Vice-Chair shall be one of the Staff Side representatives and vice versa.</p> <p>Mr P Oldham, seconded by Mr S Kennedy, moved that Mr D Louden be appointed as Chair. There being no other nominations, Mr D Louden was duly appointed and took the Chair.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED to defer the appointment of a Vice-Chair from the Staff Side to the next meeting to allow more Staff Side representatives to be in attendance.</p>	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	<p>Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of :- Mr R Gale, Mr B</p>	

Lobban, Mr C Munro of the Employer's Side; Mr M Hayes, Mr I Macleman, Mr D Griffiths of the Staff Side; Ms H Ross, CSER Area; Mr W Mackinnon, RSL Area; Ms T Urry, Infrastructure & Environment, H&S Co-ordinator; Ms D Sutherland, R&F/P&G/Depute CEX Services, H&S Co-ordinator.

3. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated for confirmation, minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16 June, 2023, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i Nairn Balblair Depot – A site inspection had been undertaken and the roof coverings of the depot were in need of replacement. This would be included in the current property programme. It was hoped to have the design work completed and the project out to tender by January 2024, with works completed by the end of this financial year. In the meantime, interim roof repairs would be carried out.

ii Drummuie – Criminal Justice Workshop - It was expected that a suitable demountable will be used to provide welfare facilities. Local Exhaust Ventilation equipment will be installed within the coming months to allow the woodworking process to continue compliant.

iii Responsible Premises Officers (RPO) - information was being collated from services to refresh the RPO list for the Council's estate. A report would be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team in October to highlight any gaps in RPO provision. It was highlighted that it was incumbent on all Services to comply with the current Council policy whereby the RPO is a Senior Officer in the premises.

iv Solar Panels – the energy team were working to have solar panels operating again in dialogue with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Council's insurers. An update on progress would be e-mailed to the Committee.

FM

v Portable appliance testing (PAT) - It was a statutory requirement that PAT was undertaken. It was highlighted that a report would be submitted to the Executive Leadership Team in October with expected costs for an in-house team to manage PAT across the Council's General Fund estate. Interim arrangements for PAT were currently in place. Guidance on visual checks of portable appliance equipment would be reissued to staff.

OHSWM

vi Training on use of woodworking machinery – a procurement exercise would be held to procure training services to train staff on the safe use of woodworking machinery in schools.

vii Assistance call alarm for accessible toilets - There was a need for discussions with the Education and Communities and Place Services to identify the locations of these alarms and what the current responses to these alarms were.

FM

viii Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) – an update was provided on mitigation work at Charleston and Nairn Academy that had been identified as having RAAC and on RAAC assessments carried out on all other school facilities. A full update on this was provided in the Property Related Health and Safety issues report circulated at item 10 on the agenda for the meeting.

A meeting had been held recently with the Scottish Government and Heads of Property Services in Scotland with regards to RAAC related issues and the Scottish Government would be considering a further Learning Estate Investment Programme 3 to improve the condition of the school estate specifically to address RAAC issues. Any further updates on this would be shared with the Committee. The Chair undertook to raise at the next Strategic Leaders Group meeting, suggesting the Leader of the Council make representations to Scottish Government for extra funding to addresses RAAC related issues affecting Council premises. In the meantime surveys would continue on the school estate and carry out mitigation work where necessary. It was confirmed that the Council's capital programme had now been approved and this included the replacement of Nairn Academy.

MR

A public meeting had been held at Charleston Academy to discuss the RAAC issues. The building was challenging in terms of its condition and it did need significant investment. A master planning approach had been undertaken for the eventual replacement of the building. However, in terms of the Council's capital programme, the Council did not have all the resources for projects it wanted to progress and this was the case for Charleston Academy. All essential works relating to the RAAC issues at the school had been undertaken. It was stressed that the Council had not waited on Scottish or UK Government direction on RAAC issues, but had acted immediately to identify the buildings affected and carry out essential works to allow buildings to remain open. There would continue to be communications with staff and parents on progress with addressing RAAC issues at Charleston Academy and an undertaking was given to include the Health services team and other services who used this building.

AMacP

6. Minutes of Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

There had been circulated, for information, the Minutes of:-

Area Health and Safety Groups

- (i) ;Ross, Skye and Lochaber – 31 August, 2023;
- (ii) Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – 30 August, 2023 ;
- (iii) Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross – 24 August, 2023

Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups

- (iv) Communities and Places Service – 6 July, 2023;
- (v) Education – 31 August, 2023
- (vi) Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance and Depute Chief Executive Services – 27 July, 2023.
- (vii) Health and Social Care Service – 30 June, 2023;

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups Minutes.

Arising from the Minutes the following general matters were raised:-

i Performance & Governance, Resources & Finance and Depute Chief Executive Services – it was clarified that while these 3 Services had no health and safety incidents in the last 3 months, they were relatively low risk Services. Other Services in the Council had reported incidents.

ii Communities and Place – the issue of filming of staff was raised which had happened on a few occasions at service points and recycling centres. The issue had been discussed at the HR Sub Group and guidance for staff on this issue would be developed.

iii Midas Training – there had been delays in Teachers accessing this training. It was advised that schools would require to procure the training.

iv EVOLVE – there were ongoing issues with the EVOLVE system which had to be completed before schools could go on excursions with pupils. High Life Highland were to do another training session on the system. While the system was bureaucratic it was important that all the health and safety checks were completed before excursions took place. Ways of making the training more easily accessible/shorter were being looked at.

7. Education Service Annual Health and Safety Report, and Updated Service Policy

There was circulated Report No. CSC/8/23 by the Head of Education Resources which reported the Service's performance during 2022/23 in respect of the health, safety and wellbeing of staff within the Education Service. A summary of the report was provided by the Head of Education Resources.

It was highlighted that there had been an issue with the data for staff attendance at online health and safety training courses and this would be corrected in the report. Also, it had been omitted from the report details of 2 notices of contraventions from the Health and Safety Executive. The

Service had worked with the Council's Health and Safety team and the Health and Safety Executive to address these issues.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and that an updated report would be e-mailed to the Committee with the updates referred to above.

AMacP

8. Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Issues

There was circulated Report No. CSC/9/23 by the Interim Head of People which provided an update on health and safety issues and developments for the Highland Council. It reviewed activities arising from Health and Safety Executive interventions; proposed changes to the health and safety management system and other activities undertaken since the last Central Safety Committee. A summary of the report was provided by the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

It was highlighted that a safety alert was to be issued regarding charging of e-bikes and scooters to ensure staff were only using manufacturers batteries and charging equipment; there should be no charging overnight and they should not be left unattended when charging.

The Committee:-

(i) **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report and at appendix 1; and
(ii) **APPROVED** the updates to the health and safety policy and guidance on Fire safety policy and Guidance on electric vehicle charging points detailed in section 5.7 of the report.

9. Update on Occupational Health and Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) Services

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/10/23 by the Interim Head of People which provided an update on the occupational health service contract and the Employee Assistance Programme for the period April-June 2023. A summary of the report was provided by the Occupational, Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager.

It was highlighted that the quality of occupational health reports was much improved and this was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

i the updated position in reference to the occupational health contract; and
ii the usage of the employee assistance programme for the period April – June 2023 (Appendix 1).

10. Property Related Health and Safety Issues

There had been circulated Report No. CSC/11/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided an update on significant

property-related health and safety concerns, any emerging future risks and new policy and procedures introduced.

In particular, reference was made to a major incident where there had been a leak from an oil tank at Thurso High School. It was estimated that 3000 litres of heating oil had been lost. Officers were working with Scottish Water and SEPA to identify the extent of the pollution and ensure mitigation measures were put in place. Officers were working with specialists to identify what caused the failure in the oil tank and there would be investigations on similar tanks on the Council's estate. An undertaking was given to contact the Council's Harbours Manager regarding inspections undertaken on oil tanks at Council owned harbours. As a result of the oil leak the games hall at the school was now out of use pending completion of the clean up operation.

TM

There was also discussion regarding plans to replace the oil heating at Thurso High School with Biomass heating.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

i the current levels of compliance and progress being made; and
ii that an update on progress in addressing the issues relating to the leak from the oil tank at Thurso High School would be provided at the next meeting.

TM

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.

Highland Council

Appeals and Disputes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee's Appeals and Disputes Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Friday 1 September, 2023 at 10.55 a.m.**

PRESENT

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale
Mr D Louden

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in Attendance:-

Ms T Urry, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment (Management Side)
Ms F Smith, HR Officer, Resources & Finance Service (Management Side)
Ms M Downie, The Grampian Community Law Centre, Appellant's representative
The Appellant
Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal & Governance (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service (Clerk to the Committee)

Also in attendance:-

Ms J Powell, Student, The Grampian Community Law Centre (Observer)

BUSINESS

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr P Oldham and Mr B Lobban.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Exclusion of the Public

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

4. Stage 3 Grievance Appeal

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Management Side and a copy of the Appeals Hearing Procedure. With the agreement of both parties there had also been tabled supplementary papers relating to the appeal.

The Chair welcomed both parties and detailed the procedure for the Appeal Hearing.

In accordance with the Appeals Procedure, the Appellant's Side presented their case to the Committee, during which a witness was called and heard. Thereafter, the Management Side presented their case during which a witness was called and heard.

Following questioning and after the Management Side and Appellant's Side had been offered the opportunity to sum up their respective cases, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Having given careful consideration to the various issues raised, the Committee **AGREED** that the grounds of the appeal had been substantiated and that the appeal be upheld.

The meeting ended at 4.25 p.m.

Highland Council

Appeals and Disputes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee's Appeals and Disputes Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Monday 11 September, 2023 at 10.00 a.m.**

PRESENT

Mr M Baird	Mr P Oldman
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr C Munro (part of meeting)
Mr L Fraser	Mr R Stewart (part of meeting)
Mr B Lobban	
Mr D Louden	

Officials in Attendance:-

Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead, Housing Investment & Building Maintenance (Management Side)
Ms F Grant , HR Officer, Resources & Finance Service (Management Side)
Mr I McLeman, Unite, Appellant's representative
The Appellant
Mrs L McGunnigle, HR Manager, Resources & Finance Service (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service (Clerk to the Committee)

BUSINESS

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Exclusion of the Public

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

4. Appeal Against Dismissal on Grounds of Capability

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the

Management Side, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant's Side and a copy of the Appeals Hearing Procedure.

The Chair welcomed both parties and detailed the procedure for the Appeal Hearing.

In accordance with the Appeals Procedure, the Management Side presented their case to the Committee, during which 2 witnesses were called and heard. During this part of the appeal procedure, 2 Members attending remotely had connection issues which could not be rectified and therefore those Members took no further part in the appeal. Thereafter, the Appellant's Side presented their case.

Following questioning and after the Management Side and Appellant's Side had been offered the opportunity to sum up their respective cases, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Having given careful consideration to the various issues raised, the Committee **AGREED** that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and that the appeal be not upheld.

The Committee determined at the time the Appellant was dismissed there was not sufficient evidence that the Appellant was fit for his job. Furthermore, the Committee was satisfied that the Authority had exercised its duty of care to the Appellant throughout his employment with the Council.

The meeting ended at 11.45 a.m.

Highland Council

Appeals and Disputes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee's Appeals and Disputes Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Thursday 19 October, 2023 at 10.00 a.m.**

PRESENT

Mr M Baird	Mr P Oldman
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr S Mackie
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro
Mr B Lobban	Mr R Stewart
Mr D Louden	

Officials in Attendance:-

Mr M Rodger, Executive Chief Officer, Housing & Property (Management Side)
Mrs H Jones , HR Business Partner, Resources & Finance (Management Side)
Mr M Whillans, Solicitor, Performance & Governance (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance (Clerk to the Committee)

BUSINESS

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Exclusion of the Public

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

4. Appeal Against Dismissal

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the Management Side, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant and a copy of the Appeals Hearing Procedure.

The Chair welcomed the Management Side to meeting and noted the Appellant had declined to attend the meeting, but had submitted a written statement of case for consideration by the Committee.

In accordance with the Appeals Procedure, the Management Side presented their case to the Committee. Thereafter, the Committee noted the Appellant's written statement of case.

Thereafter, the Management Side had been offered the opportunity to sum up their case, and the Management Side then withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Having given careful consideration to the various issues raised, the Committee **AGREED** that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and that the appeal be not upheld. The Committee determined that:

- i: the Appellant's dismissal on the grounds of 'Some Other Substantial Reason' was reasonable and upheld; and
- ii: dismissal was the only option open to the Committee on the basis that the Appellant had accepted there had been a breakdown in relationships with the service and it would not be possible for the Appellant to return to his job. A number of offers of alternative employment had been made and none of them were acceptable to the Appellant.

The meeting ended at 10.40 a.m.

Highland Council

Appeals and Disputes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee's Appeals and Disputes Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Friday 27 October, 2023 at 10.35 a.m.**

PRESENT

Mr M Baird	Mr P Oldman
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr C Munro
Mr D Fraser	Mr R Stewart
Mr D Louden	

Officials in Attendance:-

Ms J Hutchinson, Strategic Lead, Care & Support, Health & Social Care (Management Side)
Mrs H Jones , HR Business Partner, Resources & Finance (Management Side)
The Appellant
Ms LA MacAskill, GMB Organiser, Appellant's representative
Mrs L McGunnigle, HR Manager (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance (Clerk to the Committee)

Also in attendance: - Ms H Malcolm, HR Officer, Resources & Finance (observer)

BUSINESS

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Lobban and Mr R Gale.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Exclusion of the Public

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

4. Appeal Against Dismissal

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the Management Side, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant and a copy of the Appeals Hearing Procedure.

The Chair welcomed both parties to the meeting.

In accordance with the Appeals Procedure, the Management Side presented their case to the Committee. Thereafter, the Appellant's representative presented the Appellant's case.

Following questioning and after the Management Side and the Appellant's Side had been offered the opportunity to sum up their case, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Having given careful consideration to the various issues raised, the Committee **AGREED**, by a majority of the Members, that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and that the appeal be not upheld.

The meeting ended at 2.00 p.m.

**The Highland Council
Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee**

Minute of Meeting of the **Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on Monday 13 November, 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Mr M Baird (substitute)	Mr C Munro
Mr S Kennedy	Mr P Oldham (substitute)
Mr D Louden	

In Attendance:

Mr G Munro, Revenues Manager, Resources & Finance (Revenue's Side)
Ms O Khusainova, Solicitor, Resources & Finance (Revenue's Side)
Ms R Wheeler, Principal Revenues Officer, Resources & Finance (Revenue's Side)
The Appellant (remotely via Microsoft teams)
Ms T Batchelor, Principal Solicitor (Litigation & Advice), Performance & Governance (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance (Clerk to the Committee)

Also in Attendance:

Ms J Anderson, Revenues Officer, Resources & Finance (observer)

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacDonald and Mr G MacKenzie.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements from Members.

It was highlighted that the Principal Solicitor acting as adviser to the Committee had previously been involved in a court appearance on a procedural matter involving the Appellant but not in relation to this specific appeal and therefore the Adviser did not feel there was a conflict of interest. The Appellant was content there was no conflict of interest and was happy to proceed.

3. Exclusion of the Public

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

4. Non Domestic Rates Appeal Rating Liability

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the Revenue's Side, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant and a copy of the Code of Practice for Non-Domestic Rates Appeals.

The Chairman welcomed both parties to the Hearing.

In accordance with the Code of Practice, the Revenue's Side presented their case to the Committee. Thereafter, the Appellant presented his case.

Following questioning and after the Revenue's Side, and the Appellant, had summed up their respective cases, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Following discussion, the Committee, agreed, unanimously, that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and the appeal be not upheld.

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm

The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum – Elected Members/Staff Side Group

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on Wednesday 15 November, 2023 at 3.00 p.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mr A Christie (remote) Mr B Lobban
Mr R Bremner Mr D Louden
Mr J Finlayson (remote)

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr J Gibson, UNISON Mr R Selkirk (GMB) (remote)
Ms M Macrae, RCN (remote) Mr I Macleman,(UNITE/UCATT) (remote)

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Housing & Property
Mr P Nevin, Interim ECO Performance & Governance
Ms E Barrie (**EB**), Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance
Mr B Porter, Interim Head of Corporate Finance, Resources & Finance Service
Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
Mr A MacInnes (**AM**), Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Mr R Bremner in the Chair

SUBJECT/DECISION

ACTION

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr G Mackenzie and Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair from the Employer's Side, and Ms L Mackay, Mr P MacPherson from the Staff Side.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated the minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 17 August, 2023, the terms of which were approved.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

i Core Hours – it was proposed to submit a revised Flexible Working Policy, which would include core hours, to the Corporate Resources Committee meeting in December. Trade unions would be consulted on the revised policy.

EB

ii Access to Wage Slips - There had been issues with staff being able to access wage slips but this had now been resolved. Also, at the Council budget meeting in March, 2023 funds had been set aside for all staff who were not office based to have a Council login so that they could access the Corporate systems. The Staff Side queried when this would happen. It was advised that ICT services were undertaking this work and it would be checked with them when this would be implemented. An update on this would be provided to the Staff Side outwith the meeting as well as an update provided at the next meeting.

EB

In terms of the allocation of resources for all staff to have a Council login, the allocation of resources for this was just one year, but it required to be an ongoing commitment and recurring funding would need to be found for this.

iii Facilities management services – it was confirmed that the Staff Side had now been consulted on the proposal to move Facilities Management staff to a peripatetic role.

iv Actions from previous meeting – it was requested that actions from the previous meeting be listed on the agenda under matters arising on future agendas, as to whether they were completed or not.

AM

5. Service Trade Union Liaison Meetings

There had been circulated and noted the following Service Trade Union Liaison minutes of meetings:-

- i. Health, Social Care and Wellbeing – 19 October, 2023
- ii. Education – 12 September, 2023
- iii. Communities and Place – 5 October, 2023
- iv. Housing and Property (meeting postponed)
- v. Infrastructure and Environment – 11 October, 2023
- vi. Performance & Governance/Resources & Finance/Depute CEX Services – 11 October, 2023.

6. Budget Update

The Interim Head of Corporate Finance provided an update on the Council's 3 year planning approach to the budget. The Council was heavily reliant on Scottish Government grant, council tax and income from fees for its funding. There was an estimated budget gap of £108m over the next 3 years and in particular the gap for next year was estimated at £61m. This headline figure was before any

mitigations were put in place for example Scottish Government funding to freeze council tax levels or the Council setting its own council tax rate, reduce costs, use of reserves, savings, visitor tourist levy. The drivers behind the budget gap were the relatively high inflation and interest rate environment that affected costs, for example, pay awards and funding the capital programme. In terms of income the Council were planning for a flat cash settlement grant from the Scottish Government. Also, over the last decade on average the Council had saved £18m per annum. The Council would set its budget on 29 February, 2024 and budget engagement with staff and the public was highlighted. There would be consultation with staff and staff side representatives on proposed savings to meet the budget gap.

It was queried if there was an assumption of a pay increase in the budget gap as the latest offer from Cosla was that staff would be paid a minimum £15 per hour from April, 2026. The Staff Side were concerned that the Council may underestimate in its budget assumption what it required to reach the minimum £15 per hour offer. It was advised that the funding for the pay award this year had come from a number of different sources and therefore the budget assumptions for pay awards going forward were unknown at this time, but would be kept under review.

The Forum noted the position.

7. Pay Award

The Forum were advised that following national negotiations, Leaders of councils had agreed to implement the Scottish Joint Council pay award. UNISON were currently balloting their members on back dating the second uplift to be fully back dated to 1st April 2023. The closing date of the ballot was 27 November. There would be a communication to staff on the outcome of the pay award and its implementation. Payroll were working to process the pay award including backpay in December pay.

The Forum noted the position.

8. Dates for meetings 2024

The Forum approved the following dates for their meetings in 2024:-

AM

Thursday, 8 February
Wednesday 15 May
Wednesday 21 August
Thursday 7 November

The meeting was concluded at 3.45 pm