

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 20 November 2023 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
 Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr B Cameron, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Property and Housing
 Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal and Governance, Performance and Governance
 Mr G Smith, Strategic Lead – Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
 Mr K Forbes, Senior Property Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
 Mr M Greig, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
 Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance
 Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager, Communities and Place
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
 Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance
 Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr J Thrower, Group 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 the Committee.

Mr I Brown in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair reflected on the recent sad passing of Mr Graham Ross, former Councillor and Depute Provost of the City of Inverness Area. Elected to Ward 13 (Inverness West) in 2012 he resigned in May 2021 but during his tenure he proved to be an excellent Councillor for his Ward, the City and the Council as a whole. Other Members also reflected on his achievements, both as a Councillor and as a former Council employee. Having been involved in setting up the Charleston Community Complex he helped to establish the Management Committee, extending the building and battling for better facilities for the Scorguie and Charleston communities. He gained the respect of fellow Elected Members and acted both as a mentor and a role model to them. He was a big loss to of all and the Committee sent their thoughts and prayers to his family and friends.

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs H Crawford and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Item 8b – Mrs J Hendry

Item 8b – Ms M Reid

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

Item 8 – Mr A Christie

Item 8b – Mr A Graham

Item 12 – Mrs J Hendry

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Area Performance Report Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba – Aithisg Coileanaidh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No CIA/28/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- aware that the community were encouraged to install interlinked smoke alarms, information was sought, and provided, regarding the benefits generated;
- it was asked if there remained time and resource to provide the wellbeing care to staff when needed and levels of debrief were explained from local support to external referrals;
- a breakdown of incident types was requested, namely the percentage of calls devoted to fire and to rescue, and Members were informed that this information could be provided;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding recent wildfires and it was asked how Members could advise their constituents as to how to avoid wildfires from starting in the first place;
- in relation to unwanted fire alarm signals and that fire had to be evidenced by the reporter, it was asked if there had been any delay in sending an appliance if the reporter had been, for example elsewhere;
- that in addition to partnership working with Police, Ambulance and Social Care, Members would also be able to refer a constituent for a Home Fire Safety Visit, and it was asked if those applying for benefits, such as disability allowance, would be offered a visit as part of the application;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the target for availability of retained staff and if the service was taking active measures where staffing was low;
- it was queried if calls that appliances did not attend were recorded, to gauge the level of malicious calls;
- the number of female officers in the fire service was low, and holding meetings in the community or schools could encourage more to join. Members requested contact details to arrange such meetings and the details were to be provided; and
- information was sought, and provided, regarding Fire Safety Visits to Short Term Let properties.

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

4. **Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN) Business Improvement District (BID) Renewal Urachadh Sgìre Leasachadh Gnòthachais Tadhal Inbhir Nis Loch Nis**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/29/23 dated 2 November 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Executive Chief Officer Economy & Regeneration.

Members welcomed the report and felt it was excellent value for money regarding the £20k per annum amount. It was confirmed that a briefing session by Inverness BID had taken place on Friday 17 November 2023 and the intention was to carry out another briefing session in 2024/25.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Proposal for the renewal of the VILN BID; and
- * ii. **AGREED to RECOMMEND** to full Council at its meeting on 14 December 2023 that the Council supported the VILN BID Ltd Proposal in the BID ballot.

5. **Whin Park Redevelopment Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-leasachadh Pàirc a' Chonaisg**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/30/23 dated 9 November 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Whin Park was the responsibility of the Highland Council and the amount of money needed from the Common Good and Discretionary Budgets was disappointing. To prevent deterioration there should have been continuing maintenance over the years and there could not be a reliance going forward on Ward budgets;
- it was not disputed that Whin Park needed investment and the benefit of open spaces to the wellbeing and mental health of all citizens had become apparent during the Covid pandemic;
- the report suggested that Wards 13, 14, 15, 16 and 19 were allocating funding of £51,247 but it was clarified that the Ness-Side Ward (Ward 15) had chosen to allocate £30,000 instead, taking into account the number of other parks and play areas in their Ward which also required investment both now and in the future;
- although described as a City Park, the Culloden and Ardersier Ward (Ward 17) had been asked for a contribution. However, it was contended that constituents from all areas used Whin Park;
- concern was expressed that the Inverness Millburn Ward (Ward 16) had allocated the full £51,247 as some of this funding could have been used to re-open two other play parks in the Ward;
- a holistic approach covering all “strategic” parks across the city was called for to arrive at a strategy for investment;
- the Council had still to approve its Play Strategy and it was hoped there was flexibility within the redevelopment plans to adhere to any requirements that might arise as a result; and
- Whin Park should not just be a children’s park but an inter-generational facility to encourage those of all ages and abilities to access it.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the vision for the park;
- ii. **AGREED** the Scottish Government Play Park funding allocation for this Project as detailed in the report subject to the revision of an allocation of £30k from Ward 15;
- iii. **NOTED** the completed work to revitalise the boating pond;
- iv. **NOTED** the toilets were to be redeveloped in winter 2023 and funding was already secured for this;
- v. **NOTED** the feasibility study outcomes and costs for a full park redevelopment to be undertaken as per the scope of works detailed in the report to Committee on 24 November 2022; and
- vi. **NOTED** that funding opportunities would continue to be explored.

6. Inshes Junction Improvements – Proposed Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and Stopping Up Orders
Leasachaidhean Snaidhm-rathaid nan Innseagan – Òrdugh Ceannach Èigneachail ga Mholadh agus Òrdughan Stad a Bhith na Rathad-mòr

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/31/23 dated 30 October 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- improvements to the Inshes Junction had been part of the Capital Plan since 2012 but there was a feeling locally that there had been poor public communication, which, in recent years, could be partly attributed to the Covid pandemic. Whilst the improvements would benefit all of Inverness there would be an impact on the local community;
- there was doubt, with a reduced Capital Plan, if improvements would ever take place. Confirmation was sought, and provided, that the report considered by the Highland Council on 14 September 2023 had deferred this £5m project. Consequently, it was questioned why, without an approved scheme or planning application in place, this was being pursued now, causing alarm and distress. Confirmation as to the budget position for this project would be confirmed;
- clarification was sought as to the various areas which could be the subject of a Compulsory Purchase Order. Some businesses had only been notified as recently as September, suggesting that they were unaware of what was going to take place;
- concern had also been voiced by some businesses regarding access and how this would impact on them. Much of the land identified as being required was on key access routes and it was queried when perpetual rights of access would be discussed with affected parties;
- one business had, as a planning requirement, needed to address flood defences and it was queried how the improvements would impact on this;
- one landowner had emailed Members with a list of valid questions and concerns and it was hoped that officers would respond to these questions, coping Members in to the response; and
- the ownership of one area identified on the maps appended to the report, identified as Plot 17, had still to be determined and it was queried why Plot 4, some distance away, was required.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- * i. **AGREED** to recommend to The Highland Council that plans for Inshes Junction Improvements as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, were taken forward for use in progressing Compulsory Purchase Orders for the scheme;

- ii. **NOTED** the plans for Inshes Junction Improvements as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, which were to be taken forward for use in progressing Stopping Up Orders for the scheme; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a private Members' Briefing be held to provide an opportunity to discuss the finer details of the proposed improvements.

7. Inverness Common Good Fund - Reclassification of Inverness Town House car park
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Ath-sheòrsachadh Pàirc Chàraichean Taigh Baile Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/32/23 dated 25 October 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance.

During discussion, it was proposed the reclassification of the car park, from Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) to the Council, should take place on 1 January 2024 to allow the ICGF to benefit from the income in December 2023. However, it was explained that, legally, the transfer should take place as soon as possible after the discrepancy became known. It was then proposed that the Council be asked if the car park income until 31 December 2023 could be retained by the ICGF even if the asset was transferred earlier. It was also proposed that the ICGF buy the car park from the Council, however due to the complex legal situation between the Council and the ICGF, this would not be possible unless by way of a notional legal agreement.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. investigations undertaken in connection with the legal title for the Town House car park;
- ii. reclassification of the Town House car park from Common Good to General Fund;
- iii. consequent impact on the financial position for Inverness Common Good Fund;

and **AGREED**:-

- * iv. to **RECOMMEND** to the Council that, although ownership of the car park would be reclassified as early as possible, the income from the car park continue to benefit the Inverness Common Good Fund until 31 December 2023; and
- iv. to investigate the possibility of the Inverness Common Good Fund entering into a notional agreement with the Council to retain ownership of the Town House car park.

8. Inverness Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

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.

**a. Financial Monitoring
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/33/23 dated 3 November 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 30 September 2023 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets excepting estimated outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

**b. Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee Report
Aithisg Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Choitcheann Inbhir Nis**

Declarations of Interest: the undernoted Members made Declarations of Interest and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item:-

**Mrs J Hendry – as a family member played rugby at Highland Rugby Club
Mrs M Reid – as a family member attended the TFX Performing Arts Academy**

Transparency Statement: Mr A Graham made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a family member was a volunteer at Blythswood. 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/34/23 dated 9 November 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

Although support was expressed for both applications for civic hospitality, the Inverness Burns Club and Inverness Hospital Radio, concern was expressed about the provision of civic hospitality in general, given the budget was already overspent and in light of the cost of living crisis. Information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the overspends, including rising costs, and the levels of scrutiny given to the IGCF budgets.

Mr I Brown, seconded by Mr A Graham, **MOVED** to approve the applications as recommended.

Mr D Gregg, seconded by A Christie, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, to approve all applications except the two for civic hospitality, which would be postponed until 2024-25, subject to the Committee agreeing a budget in early 2024.

On a vote being taken, the motion received 15 votes and the amendment received 3 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the motion: Mr C Aitken, Mr C Ballance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Ms E Knox, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister.

For the amendment: Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg, Mrs T Robertson.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED:**
 - applications for funding totalling £133,108.60 had been received;
 - £55,231 remained in the Poverty and Inequality grant budget;
 - £125 remained in the Other grants budget; and
 - the City Vibrancy budget had been over committed by £31,242.
- ii. **APPROVED** the applications received based on either the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee
- iii. **APPROVED** the application for £150,000 towards the Whin Park Refurbishment Project as detailed in the application, which would be drawn from ICGF Reserves in addition to any sums agreed ii above;
- iv. **NOTED** the decisions taken in ii and iii above, and **AGREED** the allocation of further sums to the Grants and City Vibrancy budgets from reserves, which, if approved in accordance with the recommendations made by the Sub-Committee would total £77,752.60, for Grants and City Vibrancy and £150,000 for Whin Park; and
- v. **AGREED** to close the Grants and City Vibrancy budgets for further applications for the remainder of financial year 2023/24.

9. Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget applications which had been approved since 28 August 2023:-

- **Ward 12**
 - Dopamine Dolls: Outreach & Awareness - Purchase Initial Publicity Material - £200
 - Beauly Community Council: Christmas Lights Replacement and Upgrade - £1,500
- **Ward 13** – None
- **Ward 14**
 - Inverness Women's Aid: Operation Love Your Refugee - £2,520
 - Inverness Festival Association: Inverness Music Festival - £750
- **Ward 15** – None
- **Ward 16**
 - HLH Millburn Active Schools: Associated Schools Football Groups Ward 16 - £1,751
- **Ward 17**– None
- **Ward 19** – None

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

- i. The Committee **NOTED** the minutes of City of Inverness Area Committee held on 28 August 2023.

- ii. The Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 9 October 2023 and 30 October 2023; and
- iii. The Committee **APPROVED** the minutes of Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 4 September 2023, 9 October 2023 and 10 November 2023.

11. 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 be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

12. Inverness Common Good Fund – Sites and Premises Transaction Report Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Gnothachais Làraich is Thogalaichean

Transparency Statement: Mrs J Hendry made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Shareholder of Teclan, who worked for two of the businesses listed in this item. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed her position in relation to the item and any personal connection, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No CIA/35/23 dated 30 October 2023 by the Head of Economic Development & Regeneration and Property Manager.

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

13. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

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

- (i) “That the artwork transfers of footprints and paw prints that have sprung up in Lombard Street, Drummond Street and Union Street be removed. They do nothing to improve the appearance of our city or increase the economic performance of town centre traders.”

Signed: Mr A Christie Mrs T Robertson

S95 officer assessment of financial implications.

This motion was anticipated to have a financial implication. Officers have estimated the cost of cleaning/removal as £2,800. The risk has been highlighted that this approach, given the nature of the materials, may not prove successful. If so, it was estimated that costs of full replacement of the slab stones and associated labour and materials would be in the region of £12,000. This was an estimate and with the potential that costs may differ, and may be higher, given the specialised and made to order nature of the materials.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- The artwork had been implemented without this Committee's agreement or consultation with traders and did nothing to improve the appearance of the city centre. Some traders had the artwork right outside their premises and they didn't want it there. The motion was to remove the artwork and it was appreciated there would be costs associated with this;
- Significant funding had been put to upgrade the Victorian Market to make it look attractive and these bright coloured objects on the pavement were not attractive and did nothing for the city centre and should be removed;
- It was requested that a decision on the artwork be deferred until the February 2024 meeting to allow time for an enquiry into changing the colour or removing the artwork at minimal cost;
- It was confirmed that the decision to implement the artwork was sanctioned by the Inverness City Area Manager following decisions taken by businesses within the Victorian Market to attract footfall into the market and a catalyst to encouraging people into the city centre. The bright colours had been used for the benefit of people with sight disabilities. The project had cost £800. Ways of improving the artwork could be looked at and proposals brought back to this Committee for consideration;
- Reference was made to anecdotal evidence that young people did enjoy having a path to follow into the market. However, the view was expressed that in doing so people were not visiting other shops on the way to the market and this was why businesses did not like the artwork outside their premises;
- There had been a lack of communication on the artwork and this needed to be improved going forward and lessons learned from the project;
- It was suggested that the metal motifs that were missing from the city centre pavements should be replaced at the same time as the work to remove the footprints/pawprints, when there was funding available. It was advised that this suggestion was not within the terms of the motion and therefore was not for consideration by the Committee at this time. However the suggestion could be looked at separately outwith the meeting; and
- The funding to remove the artwork would require to come from the Inverness Common Good Fund.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, **MOVED** that the artwork transfers of footprints and paw prints that have sprung up in Lombard Street, Drummond Street and Union Street be removed. They do nothing to improve the appearance of our city or increase the economic performance of town centre traders.

Ms K MacLean, seconded by Mrs J Hendry, moved as an **AMENDMENT** to defer any decision about the 'footsteps' printed around the city centre until the February 2024 meeting, with the aim to increase footfall, especially to the Victorian Market. This will allow time for an enquiry into the changing of their colour, or even their removal. Damage to slabs is a risk. The latter has been costed at £12.5k, which we deem not an acceptable risk given the financial constraints on our budget at present.

On a vote being taken, the motion received 7 votes and the amendment received 14 votes, with no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the motion: Mr C Aitken, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Mackintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs T Robertson

For the amendment: 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, Mrs M Reid, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs B McAllister, Ms K MacLean

Decision:

The Committee **AGREED** to defer any decision about the ‘footsteps’ printed around the city centre until the February 2024 meeting, with the aim to increase footfall, especially to the Victorian Market. This will allow time for an enquiry into the changing of their colour, or even their removal. Damage to slabs is a risk. The latter has been costed at £12.5k, which we deem not an acceptable risk given the financial constraints on our budget at present.

- (ii) “That the City of Inverness Area Committee notes the decision by Council on 14th September to defer the Capital funding allocation for the following schools. In order that the Area elected members can better understand the impact on the educational experience and attainment of our pupils, the impact on capacity limitations at all Area Schools and any health and safety risks posed by the deferral that a seminar be arranged as soon as possible”.

Charleston Academy £13M deferral in funding
Culloden Academy £6.5M deferral in funding
Ness Castle Phase 2 £7.7M deferral in funding
Stratton Primary £22M deferral in funding
East Inverness New Academy £59M deferral in funding”

Signed: Mr A Christie Mr D Gregg Mr A Graham

S95 officer assessment of financial implications.

This motion was not anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. There may be ancillary costs, or opportunity costs, associated with the calling of a seminar and officer time involved in preparing for such a meeting.

During discussion, it was highlighted that good educational facilities had an impact on good educational attainment and the motion sought a seminar for Members to understand what the deferral of capital funding allocation to the schools would mean for learning and experiences of children in these schools. Children were being taught in temporary accommodation and building environments that were far from ideal compared to those being taught in standard permanent accommodation. The City of Inverness was affected disproportionately by this deferral in capital spend than any other area of the Council. There was a need for more information to Members, the public and parents on the impact of the deferral.

Other views expressed were that everyone was aware of the distress and frustration at the inability to allocate capital funding to the schools set out in the motion. The immediate priority was to allocate funds for essential repairs and £5m had been set aside for this. The situation would continue to be monitored as would dialogue with the Scottish Government to try and obtain additional funding. Irrespective of whether to have a seminar or not, this would not achieve any more funding and therefore the Council could not meet any more expectation. The budget situation in the Council was very challenging and difficult decisions would have to be made and a seminar would not assist the situation. Therefore, an amendment to the motion was proposed as shown below.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr D Gregg, **MOVED** that the City of Inverness Area Committee notes the decision by Council on 14th September to defer the capital funding allocation for the schools listed above. In order that the Area elected members can better understand the impact on the educational experience and attainment of our pupils, the impact on capacity limitations at all area schools and any health and safety risks posed by the deferral that a seminar be arranged as soon as possible.

Mrs J Hendry, seconded by Mr B Boyd, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that the City of Inverness Area Committee notes that £5m has been set aside in the 5-year capital budget to enable any urgent maintenance, repair or health and safety issues in Charleston and Culloden Academies, and further notes the report agreed by Council in September that latest population projection and other data is suggesting a lower school capacity impact from new housing development. As a result, for a few capacity driven school investment projects, including new school builds, current assessment is that the need for full capital replacement is not expected to be required within the life of the new 5-year capital programme. Full replacement projects assessed as not being required within the 5-year programme are Ness Castle Primary Phase 2, Stratton Primary School and East Inverness Secondary. In all cases there is a recognition that school roll forecasts continue to be kept under regular review, and if circumstances change and the need and timescale for delivery alters, future capital programme reviews provide the opportunity to revisit assumptions.

On a vote being taken, the motion received 9 votes and the amendment received 12 votes, with no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the motion: Mr C Aitken, Mr D Macpherson, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Graham, Mr A Christie, Mrs T Robertson.

For the amendment: 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, Ms K MacLean, Mrs M Reid

Decision:

It was **AGREED** that the City of Inverness Area Committee noted that £5m had been set aside in the 5-year Capital Budget to enable any urgent maintenance, repair or health and safety issues in Charleston and Culloden Academies, and further noted the report agreed by Council in September that latest population projection and other data was suggesting a lower school capacity impact from new housing development. As a result, for a few capacity driven school investment projects, including new school builds, current assessment was that the need for full capital replacement was not expected to be required within the life of the new 5-year capital programme. Full Replacement Projects assessed as not being required within the 5-year programme were Ness Castle Primary Phase 2, Stratton Primary School and East Inverness Secondary. In all cases there was a recognition that school roll forecasts continued to be kept under regular review, and if circumstances changed and the need and timescale for delivery altered, future capital programme reviews provide the opportunity to revisit assumptions.

The meeting concluded at 1.15p.m.

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held in the Second Floor Committee Room, Inverness Town House, on Thursday, 21 December 2023 at 2pm.

Highland Council:

Mrs J Hendry
Mr R Mackintosh
Mrs K MacLean
Mr I Brown

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Ms K Raite, Inverness Events Manager

Mrs J Hendry in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were intimate don behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair.

2. Exclusion of the Public

Members **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.,

3. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 10 November 2023.

5. City Area Community Events Programme 23/24

The Inverness City Area Manager and the Events Manager updated Members on the plans for the Community Events Programme for the period up until 31 March 2024.

The Red Hot Highland Fling

Updates were provided on the following: parking, site layout, parade route and traffic management, possible impact of weather conditions, security, insurance, catering, ticket sales, disabled provision and accessible toilets, press tickets, marketing and social media, budget overview, risks, the running order, and

overall management of events.

During discussion, the following issues and action points were raised

- it was clarified that parade performers would go to the back stage area and either leave or prepare for further performances, as appropriate;
- information was sought and provided on crowd management, including entry and exit arrangements, cash handling, security, and communication, with particular reference to the start of the event when the crowd following the parade would arrive;
- arrangements for monitoring people leaving and allowing more in were summarised. The City Area Manager was the event safety officer and would make appropriate decisions on the night, all in line with the requirements of the civic government public entertainment licence;
- the ground would be appropriately prepared to take all reasonably practicable steps to avoid being slippery. It was noted that attendees have been warned to wear appropriate clothing and footwear;
- a reminder at the start of the parade for people to buy tickets online in advance would be helpful. The Events Manager would investigate the use of A-boards with a QR code to take people to the ticket purchase website;
- the City Leader would email CIAC Members updating them and reminding them to book their tickets as well as seeking their assistance, if required, on the night;
- the use of one loud firework to start the event at 8.30pm should be made clear in publicity and in communication with ticket holders to minimum any distress from the unexpected noise. The midnight fireworks were less of an issue as would be expected;
- the Events Manager would discuss with the Provost if and when would be an appropriate time for her to speak to the crown, to include offering thanks for their support of the Common Good Fund;
- film footage could be useful for publicity for future events;
- 4,400 tickets needed to be sold to break even;
- assurance was sought and provided that publicity was being undertaken with hotel and B&B associations and groups. The assistance of Visit Loch Ness Inverness with this was summarised; and
- in relation to misinformation on social media, it might be helpful to publicise clear budget information and clarify the role of the Common Good Fund.

Highland Games 2024

- Corporate sponsorship was being investigated;
- Bught Park would be largely out of operation due to construction, and consideration was being given to hiring a grandstand, with a capacity of 500 capacity, or a big top with a 3,000 person capacity, which was costly, but for which a grant application was being made, with the outcome due to be known in March 2024. The big top would remove considerable weather risk; and
- it was hoped that if the ceilidh at the Red Hot Highland Fling was successful, this would be good publicity for a further ceilidh at the Highland Games.

Members **NOTED** the information and **AGREED** the actions raised during

discussion.

6. Budget – Update – 2023/24

A summary was provided on the Events & Festivals budget. The Highland Games had made less than hoped due to the inclement weather on the day. Some of the costs already incurred were one off. It was suggested the budget be explained more effectively and transparently to the general public, and the City Leader thanked the Events Manager and the City Area Manager for their work.

Members **NOTED** the information provided.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Members **NOTED** the next meeting would be 18 January 2024 at 1pm.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held in the First Floor Committee Room, Inverness Town House, on Thursday, 18 January 2024 at 1.45pm.

Highland Council:

Mrs J Hendry
Mrs K MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (remote)
Mr R Mackintosh (remote)

Non Members of the Group in attendance:

Mr D Macpherson (remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Ms K Raite, Inverness Events Manager (remote)
Mr C Kershaw, Eastgate
Ms M Laws, Inverness Bid (remote)
Mr D Johnstone, Visit Inverness Loch Ness (remote)
Ms E Harrison, Visit Inverness Loch Ness (remote)

Mrs J Hendry in the Chair

Preliminaries

The initial fifteen minutes of this meeting was inquorate, and therefore considered informal. The meeting became quorate during item 5 when Mrs G Campbell Sinclair connected remotely, followed a short while later by Mr R MacKintosh.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mr I Brown.

2. Exclusion of the Public

Members **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the minutes of the previous Meeting held on 21 December 2023.

5. City Area Community Events Programme 23/24

The Inverness City Area Manager and the Events Manager provided updates on the Events Programme as follows:

Red Hot Highland Fling

3798 tickets were sold, of which 1048 were sold in 24 hours prior to the event, which was successfully delivered based on a new format involving a parade and an interactive audience music event with leading artists from the traditional music scene.

Plans were being developed for this year's event subject to approval of the budget which would include further development of the artistic content of both parade and traditional music content. A further focus would be given to food and bar provision.

Winter Festival Budget

Preliminary figures showed the Bonfire Event being £4,224 under budget, the Christmas Lights Event being £5,941 under budget, and the RHHF showing a significantly lower than expected cost, delivering, subject to final income and expenditure being accounted for, a minimal overspend.

The Events Manager was thanked for her work in managing the events and the budget. It was pointed out that the costs incurred to develop the Winter Festival website could be spread across several years as this was a one-off expenditure.

Highland Games 2024

Plans were in hand to deliver the 2024 Highland Games with exciting new developments being considered relating to taking the ceilidh, premiered in 2023, to the next level. Third party funding options were being applied for and further information would be available, including when tickets were going on sale, for the ceilidh as soon as funding was confirmed.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- all options for the Highland Games would be appropriately risk assessed;
- clarification was sought and provided that there was one website for the Highland Games, and another for the Winter Festival;
- a potential expansion of the use of pipe bands at the RHHF events was suggested;
- flexibility would continue to be applied to the use of venues.

Confirmation was given that all current venues were properly risk assessed, both in terms of event viability and general health and safety; and

- confirmation was sought and provided that early work was being undertaken for issuing tenders for stalls and trader attendance at the Highland Games 2024, and that these would be issued immediately in the event that the City Area Committee agreed the 2024/25 budget. Although another meeting of the Working Group was proposed to consider the tender process, it was decided that the Provost, the City Area Manager, and the Events Manager could meet separately if required.

Members **NOTED** the position and **AGREED** the actions raised during discussion.

6. Budget – Update – 2023/24

Members **NOTED** the information that had been circulated on the budget and that reports on programmed spend would be taken to future meetings of the Working Group.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Members **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting would be Friday 23 February 2024 at 10am.

The meeting concluded at 2.15pm

The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 22 January 2024 at 1.00 pm.

Present:

Mr M Cameron (remote)
Mr A Graham (Chair)
Mrs I MacKenzie (remote)

Ms K MacLean (remote)
Mrs E McAllister
Mrs M Reid (remote)

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager – Community Regeneration, Environment, Infrastructure and Economy Service (remote)
Ms F Hepburn, Project Officer – Community Regeneration, Environment, Infrastructure and Economy Service (remote)
Mrs H Tolmie, Administrative Assistant, Inverness City Area Manager's Office
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

Mr A Graham in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Aitken, Mr C Ballance, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Macpherson and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

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

Item 4: Mrs M Reid

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 4: Ms K MacLean and Mrs E McAllister

3. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Community Regeneration Funding

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/01/24 dated 9 January 2024 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy. Copies of the full

applications and supporting technical assessments had been made available via SharePoint.

Members were advised that applications under the Community Regeneration Fund required to be considered noting the key factors presented within the report that influenced the strength of each application. These factors were an important point of difference to the general need to ensure that the interests of the residents of the former Burgh were taken into account when considering applications for support from the Inverness Common Good Fund.

During a summary of the report, it was explained that the available funding was £528,790 comprising £483,816 capital and £44,974 revenue. There were nine applications for capital funding totalling £420,799.55 and there was therefore sufficient funding available to recommend approval of all capital applications if Members were so minded. There were four applications for revenue funding totalling £108,163.00, which exceeded the funding available, and Members would therefore have to undertake a prioritisation process to agree the recommended funding awards.

It was highlighted that three applications that had been invited forward at the Expression of Interest stage had not been progressed to the Sub-Committee, as follows:-

- Beauly Shinty Club, Fencing at Braeview Park – application approved by the Local Action Group for Community Led Local Development Funding
- Aird Community Trust, Kirkhill Community Centre Energy Works – application withdrawn
- Knocknagael Ltd, Knocknagael Green Hub - significant change from the project outlined in the approved Expression of Interest

Discussion took place on the merits or otherwise of the applications for revenue funding during which clarification was sought, and provided, on a number of points and account was taken of the RAG assessment and scoring undertaken by officers. With regard to the application by Inverness Sea Cadets, it was suggested they could apply for Ward Discretionary Funding and that the application could be assessed for eligibility for UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

In relation to the applications for capital funding, given that all the projects were eligible and there was sufficient funding available, it was proposed that they all be recommended for approval and that the remaining balance be ringfenced to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan.

Following discussion, the Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position in respect of the three applications that had not been progressed to the Sub-Committee;
- ii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee, at its meeting on 5 February 2024, that the applications for Community Regeneration Funding be determined as detailed below; and
- iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee, and its meeting on 5 February 2024, that the remaining balance of capital funding be ringfenced to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan.

Ref: 2126

Organisation: Inverness Wheeled Sports Club

Project title: Inverness City Wheeled Sports Feasibility Study and Strategy

Grant requested: £18,000.00 (Revenue)

Recommendation: **APPROVE** a partial award of £9,987.00.

Transparency Statements: Ms K MacLean and Mrs E McAllister made Transparency Statements in respect of the following application on the basis that they were Trustees of the Merkinch Partnership Board. However, they had not been party to the discussions around the development and submission of the application and, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

Ref: 2137

Organisation: Merkinch Partnership

Project title: One Stop Shop Advice Service

Grant requested: £25,000.00 (Revenue)

Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2173

Organisation: Inverness Sea Cadets Unit – TS Briton

Project title: Feasibility Study for future of Inverness Sea Cadets Buildings

Grant requested: £25,200.00 (Revenue)

Recommendation: **DEFER** due to limited availability of funds.

Ref: 2196

Organisation: LGBT Youth Scotland

Project title: LGBTYS Highlands

Grant requested: £39,963.00 (Revenue)

Recommendation: **APPROVE** a partial award of £9,987.00

Ref: 1038

Organisation: The Highland Council

Project title: Whin Park

Grant requested: £100,000.00 (Capital)

Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2149

Organisation: Free North Church

Project title: Restoration Project

Grant requested: £40,000.00 (Capital)

Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2161

Organisation: Safe Space Inverness

Project title: Safe Space Inverness

Grant requested: £33,800.00 (Capital)

Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2175

Organisation: Glen Urquhart Men's Shed Group

Project title: Workshop and Office Refurbishment
Grant requested: £10,000.00 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2181
Organisation: 2nd Inverness Scouts Group
Project title: Hall Insulation Project
Grant requested: £36,514.55 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2216
Organisation: Culduthel Woods Group
Project title: Culduthel Woods Path Restoration Project
Grant requested: £12,000.00 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Declaration of Interest: Mrs M Reid declared an interest in the following application as a member of the Inverness Caledonian Thistle Women's Football Academy

Ref: 2250
Organisation: Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Development
Project title: ICT Community Hub
Grant requested: £50,000.00 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2281
Organisation: The Ledge SCIO
Project title: Clean Air/Warm Air
Grant requested: £58,485.00 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

Ref: 2282
Organisation: Culterlann Inbhir Nis
Project title: Insulating the East Church
Grant requested: £90,000.00 (Capital)
Recommendation: **APPROVE**

5. Grants Monitoring and Application Process

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/02/24 dated 4 January 2024 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the position in relation to current expenditure and existing grants; and
- ii. the new application form and guidance notes.

6. Inverness Angling Club

There had been circulated an application from Inverness Angling Club for financial support towards the continuing management of the Inverness Common Good Town Fishings.

The Sub-Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £9,500 to be paid from the Other Properties Budget.

7. Inverness Business Improvement District (BID) Ltd

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/03/24 dated 5 January 2024 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

In introducing the report, the Inverness City Area Manager explained that Members were being asked to consider the applications from Inverness BID and make recommendations to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 5 February 2024, at which the 2024/25 Inverness Common Good Budget would be agreed.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee, at its meeting on 5 February 2024, that the applications from Inverness BID, as detailed in the appendices to the report, be determined as follows:-

i. City Centre of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2024

Detailed discussion took place on both the city centre and wider city of Inverness floral displays, during which the following main points were raised:-

- the need to be mindful of the cost of living crisis and the financial outlook of the Common Good fund was emphasised, and the work being undertaken to better understand the costs involved in the provision and maintenance of the floral displays, and to potentially reduce costs in future years, was welcomed;
- on the point being raised, it was explained that, given the complexities associated with maintaining the floral displays which included not only watering but feeding, further work was required to establish whether the Community Payback team could potentially assist;
- it having been queried whether less expensive plants could be used, it was explained that this had been tried previously without success, and that Bought Nursery knew which plants did well in different parts of the city, each of which had its own microclimate; and
- it was proposed that the applications for the coming year be approved but that greater contributions be sought from businesses in future years.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding amounting to £52,410 be **APPROVED**.

ii. Wider City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2024

As discussed at i. above, the Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding amounting to £23,631 be **APPROVED**.

iii. Operation Respect – Task Team Easter, Summer and Autumn 2024

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding amounting to £13,403 be **APPROVED**.

iv. Inverness Gull Project 2024

Detailed discussion took place, during which the following main points were raised:-

- the main issue was litter and food waste, and there was a need for better signage to remind people, particularly tourists, not to feed the gulls;
- there was a particular issue in respect of the route from the city centre to Millburn Academy. A small proportion of pupils were dropping litter, and gulls could be seen following pupils and dive-bombing them. It was suggested there was a need for more bins along the route, and the Head Teacher was keen to engage with the Council to improve the situation;
- it was necessary to recognise the impact of aggressive dive-bombing gulls on locals and visitors;
- the effect of the egg/nest removal programme was cumulative and it was necessary to maintain it so as not to undo the progress that had been made;
- the effectiveness of the potential additional options set out in the application was questioned, and it was proposed that only the core project programme be approved; and
- a request was made for more evidence-based research on egg/nest removal, and the Inverness City Area Manager confirmed this could be provided. It was added that it would be helpful if information could be published online so Members could refer people to it.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding for the core project programme amounting to £13,606 be **APPROVED**.

It was also **AGREED** that further information on egg/nest removal be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee.

v. SAFE Inverness Project 2024

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding amounting to £9,700 be **APPROVED**.

vi. Coach and Visitor Ambassador Project 2024

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the application for funding amounting to £19,865 be **APPROVED**.

8. Evaluation Forms

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, Evaluation Forms submitted by applicants on completion of their projects.

9. Homologation of Civic Hospitality Requests

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award the following hospitality request:-

- Private Dinner to honour the Vice Lord-Lieutenant's retiral and to recognise the many years of contributions he has made to the City of Inverness.

10. Civic Lighting Requests

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the following Civic Lighting requests:-

- The Alzheimer's Foundation of America - Light the World in Teal
- Poppy Scotland
- Activism against Domestic Abuse and gender based violence
- World Aids Day
- Mikeysline
- Scottish Women's Aid

11. Civic Hospitality Recurring Events

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/04/24 dated 8 January 2024 by the Inverness City Area Manager which invited the Sub-Committee to consider approval in principle for recurring annual events.

The Sub-Committee:-

- APPROVED**, in principle, the recurring events list as circulated; and
- NOTED** that the list would be presented for formal consideration at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee set for 22 April 2024.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The Sub-Committee **NOTED**:-

- that the next meeting would take place on Monday 22 April at 10.00 am; and
- the timetable below for applications during 2024.

City of Inverness Area Committee	Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee	Applications due by date
27 May 2024	22 April 2024	29 March 2024
19 August 2024	5 August 2024	12 July 2024
18 November 2024	28 October 2024	4 October 2024

Discussion took place as to how best to manage grant applications in 2024/25 given the Common Good Fund was likely to be oversubscribed, and it was **AGREED** that the matter be brought to the meeting on 22 April 2024 for consideration.

The meeting concluded at 2.30 pm.