

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 5 February 2024 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness Senior Community Development Manager Inverness & South, Communities and Place
Mr M Greig, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr S Grant, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr J Taylor, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr J Henderson, Housing Manager South, Housing & Property Service
Ms J Macrae, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property Service
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs G MacPherson, 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 the Committee.

Mr I Brown in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, and on behalf of the Council, the Chair and Members paid personal tributes to Councillor Roderick Balfour who had recently passed away and extended deep condolences and sympathies to his family. Councillor Roderick had been elected to serve the Highland Council for five consecutive terms from 1999-2017, serving until 2022 as an independent Councillor for Culloden and Ardersier.

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Aitken, Mrs H Crawford, Mr K Gowans, and Mr D Gregg.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 5 – Mrs J Hendry

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

Item 10 – Mr A Christie

Item 11 – Mr A Christie

3. New Years Honours Urraman na Bliadhn' Ùire

The Committee **NOTED** that the following individuals had been recognised in the New Year's Honours List: -

- Robert Stewart Nicol, OBE
- Fiona Bennett Morrison, MBE
- Robert Coburn, BEM

4. Police – Area Performance Report Poileas – Geàrr-aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/01/24 by the Inverness Area Commander. In introducing the report, the Commander advised and apologised that the figures relating to Protect Vulnerable People were not accurate and an updated report would be circulated to the Committee.

During discussion, the following main comments were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the increasing level of thefts particularly in respect of shoplifting, noting that these cases were not limited to food products but also included other essential items. Members recognised the importance of the Council helping those in need and it was queried what they could do to assist;
- regarding pages 7 – 9 of the report, it was queried what the main scenarios were around the statistics on motor vehicle crimes;
- Members expressed real concern that sexual crime, and drug use crime statistics had substantially risen. In this regard guidance on how to reassure local communities was requested;
- regarding missing persons, information was sought on the different age groups and what the main reasons were in order to offer guidance to local communities to protect them;
- it was confirmed that the Police would discuss and work with Members in their community to carry out leaflet drops to provide helpful up to date information;
- it was queried if the Police sensed that County Lines were affecting other more rural parts of Highland and not just Inverness City;

- information was sought and provided on the figure of 79 supply of drugs convictions and if this was considered a low figure. It was also queried what work was being carried out at schools to educate and protect young people;
- clarification was sought and provided regarding the Police policy for enforcing the new 20mph speed limits in the city;
- suggestion was made that the Police reports separate issues at ward level so this information could be passed onto Community Councils, as they want to understand and contribute to assist locally;
- as the long-term averages for drink and drug driving statistics had gone up whereas speed offenses had gone down, it was queried if this reflected reality or reflected where limited Police resources had been deployed. In addition, Members requested that future Police reports include an asterisk next to statistics where particular Police focus and resource had been deployed;
- it was highlighted that families also required assistance via organised initiatives during the summer period for food poverty as this holiday season proved challenging for them. In this regard, it was confirmed that local charities provided free hot meals on different days of the week for persons in food poverty, and a list outlining these arrangements would be circulated to Members; and
- reassurance was provided by the Senior Community Development Manager that Inverness Partnership initiatives were taking place across Inverness to support local communities. In addition the Council was working with Inverness Community Council Forum and this had become a robust reliable working arrangement to support local communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2023 – 30 November 2023;
- ii. the figures contained in the report regarding Protecting Vulnerable People were incorrect and an updated report would be circulated; and
- iii. that further information would be circulated on the local charitable initiatives available for support with hot meals and food banks.

5. Community Regeneration Fund Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd

Declarations of Interest – Mrs J Hendry made a Declaration of Interest as one of the applications was a customer of Teclan Ltd of which she was a major shareholder, and in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, she left the meeting for this item.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/02/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** :-

- i. the formal recommendation from the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee contained in paragraph 1.4 of the report as follows:
 - a. approved capital funding for the following projects:
 - The Highland Council: Whin Park project - £100,000
 - Free North Church: Restoration Project - £40,000

- Safe Space Inverness: Safe Space Inverness - £33,800
 - Glen Urquhart Men's Shed Group: Workshop & Office Refurbishment - £10,000
 - 2nd Inverness Scout Group: Hall Insulation Project - £36,514.55
 - Culduthel Woods Group: Culduthel Woods Path Restoration Project – £12,000
 - Inverness Caledonian Thistle Community Development: ICT Community HUB - £50,000
 - The Ledge SCIO: Clean Air /Warm Air - £58,485
 - Cultarlann Inbhir Nis: Insulating the East Church - £90,000
- b. approved revenue funding for the following projects:
- Merkinch Partnership: One Stop Shop Advice Service - £25,000
 - Inverness Wheeled Sports Club: Inverness City Wheeled Sports Feasibility Study & Strategy - £9,987
 - LGBT Youth Scotland: LGBTYS Highlands - £9,987
- c. the application from Inverness Sea Cadets Unit, TS Briton, be deferred; and
- ii. the recommendation to ringfence any remaining balance within the 2023/24 allocation to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan, subject to full applications being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2024/25 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgireil 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/03/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed to the Roads team for all their hard work over the past year;
- focus was highlighted on investing and improving road drainage across Inverness to reduce instances of flooding;
- it was queried if footpath maintenance could be assigned its own separate budget line for reactive and planned maintenance;
- information was sought on how the backlog of blocked road drains/gullies would be addressed across Inverness. In this regard it was queried if the shortage of gully-sucker machinery was a Highland Council issue or if this was replicated across other local authorities;
- it was acknowledged that not all potholes and roads issues were the fault or responsibility of the Council as other utility organisations had their own repair responsibilities;
- it was queried if road repairs could be resolved at the first attempt to save time and resources in having to return at a later date to carry out more extensive repair works;
- information was sought and provided on whether there was a budget line to replace illegible street signage; and
- attention was drawn to white line road painting which had begun to wear out, and information was sought if there was a white lining plan of works for Inverness.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2024/2025 Area Roads Capital Programme for the City of Inverness and Area.

7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2024/25 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CIA/04/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following comments were raised:-

- the setting of Garages Rents at Area Committees was queried and it was suggested that it would be more appropriate for this to be considered by the Housing and Property Committee as part of the annual Housing Revenue Account rent setting report;
- the Culloden and Ardersier Ward had 25 sites but only one garage. Out of the 25 sites, 15 were occupied and information was sought as to what they were used for;
- Members could be more proactive with filling the 83 garage voids and information as to their location would assist;
- the cost of upkeep of garages was queried; and
- there had been a sharp increase in the demand for storage facilities and there was an opportunity to generate income through the utilisation of the garage voids.

The Committee **AGREED** a 7.95% rent increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

8. Inverness Wards Repurposing COVID-19 Fund Uàrdan Inbhir Nis ag Ath-adhbhrachadh Maoin COVID-19

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/05/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

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

i. Ward 15 – Inverness Ness-side

- £3,881 to support Transport Services with the installation of new enclosed bus stop area providing a shelter for all bus users within the community;
- £10,000 to support the improvements to the park area next to the Inverness Gaelic Primary School (Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis) providing a green community space for all to enjoy; and
- £6,197.27 to support improvements to the green area of Holm Park for the users to continue to enjoy.

ii. Ward 16 – Inverness Millburn

- £3,881 to support Transport Services with the installation of new enclosed bus stop area.

9. Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following City of Inverness and Area Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 20 November 2023:-

- **Ward 12**
 - Kilmorack Community Council: Teanassie School Swimming Transport 2024 £1,500
 - Dores Parish Hall: Wifi Heaters plus Internet Control - £799
 - Strathglass Community Council: Glen Strathfarrar Public Shelter - £613
- **Ward 13**
 - Inverness Disc Golf: Putting Baskets - £950
 - Safe, Strong & Free: Early Intervention Project - £846.66
 - Muirtown Primary School: Reading Champs Promoting Reading for Pleasure Across the School - £1,000
 - Kinmylies Primary School: Primary 7 Residential Trip 2023/24 - £1,500
- **Ward 14**
 - Merkinch Football Academy: Goals for the Future - £2,500
 - Safe, Strong & Free: Early Intervention Project - £846.66
- **Ward 15**
 - Inverness Ice Centre Limited: Support for the New Winter Season - £1,428
- **Ward 16**
 - Raigmore Primary School: Transportation to Swimming Lessons - £1,500
 - Raigmore Primary School: M&M Theatre Visit to School – Sleeping Beauty - £1,000
 - Safe, Strong & Free: Early Intervention Project - £846.66
- **Ward 17**
 - Culloden Balloch Baptist Church: Warm Places / Hot Food - £1,400
 - Ardersier Hub: Food Bank Provisions - £750
 - Ardersier Hub: Gritting Pavements - £250
- **Ward 19**
 - HLH Milton of Leys Primary School: Football Training Session Let Costs - £4,052.50

10. Paw Print Trail – Victorian Market Slighe Lorg Spòige – Margaidh Bhictòrianach

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non - Executive 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/06/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Disappointment was expressed at the lack of progress. Some Members found the Paw Print Trail out-of-keeping and detracted from the city centre. There were lessons to be learnt, one being the lack of consultation with businesses out with the Victorian Market. Moving forward, it was hoped to reinstate the Victorian

Market's Stakeholder Group with a view to engaging with other city centre businesses to enable ideas and projects which would bring mutual benefit to the City.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the costs and implications for any alterations being made to the Trail;
- ii. **AGREED** the Trail be left in place at present until the benefits and any implications were understood; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a review be undertaken later in year with associated recommendations coming back to this committee.

11. Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non - Executive 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) Inverness Common Good Fund - 2022/23 Annual Accounts and Final Monitoring Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Cunntasan Bliadhna agus Sgrùdadh Deireannach 2022/23

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/07/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Committee **NOTED** the final monitoring report (Appendix 1) and Statement of Accounts (Appendix 2) for the Inverness Common Good Fund for the year ended 31 March 2023.

b) Financial Monitoring Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/08/24 by Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 31 December 2023 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets excepting estimated outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

c) Inverness Common Good Fund Budget Setting for 2024/25 Suidheachadh Buidseit Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis airson 2024/25

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/09/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Common Good Fund budget for 2024/25 as detailed within the report and Appendices.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/10/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. A copy of supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet A.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following grant applications:-

- The City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2024 - £52,410
- Wider City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2024 - £23,631
- Operation Respect Easter/Summer/Autumn 2024 – £13,403
- Inverness Gull Project 2024 - £13,606
- Safe Inverness Project 2024 - £9,700
- Coach & Visitor Ambassador Project 2024 - £19,865

12. Appointments to Outside Bodies
Suidheachadh Dhreuchdan gu Buidhnean on Taobh A-muigh

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr R MacKintosh be appointed to the Ness District Salmon Fisheries Board to replace Mr C Ballance.

13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated and:

- NOTED** the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 20 November 2023;
- APPROVED** the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 21 December 2023 and 18 January 2024; and
- APPROVED** Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 22 January 2024.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.