

The Highland Council No. 4 2024/2025

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 27 June 2024 at 10.05 am.

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate
Assistant Chief Executive - People
Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Joint Democratic Services Managers

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale, Mr R Gunn, Mr A MacDonald, Mr A MacKintosh, Ms M Nolan, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mr A Sinclair and Mrs L Sagers.

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

The Council **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 15.b – Mr G MacKenzie and Mr H Morrison
 Item 15.c – Mr D Louden and Mr C Munro
 Item 15.d – Mr K Gowans and Mr M Green
 Item 15.e – Mr J Finlayson and Mr D Millar
 Item 15.f – Mr D Fraser and Mrs M Cockburn
 Item 15.g – Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Ms S Atkin
 Item 15.h – Mr I Brown
 Item 15.i – Mr A Christie

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

Item 4.iii – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg
 Item 5 (11) – Mr A Christie
 Item 11 – Mr D Gregg
 Item 13 – Mr A Christie
 Item 14 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg
 Item 16 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg
 Urgent Item – Mr A Christie and Mr Gregg

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

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 9 May 2024 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

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

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

*Black Isle and Easter Ross Committee	13 May 2024
Nairnshire Committee	13 May 2024
Lochaber Area Committee	14 May 2024
Sutherland County Committee	14 May 2024
Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee	16 May 2024
*Caithness Committee	20 May 2024
Dingwall, Seaforth Committee	20 May 2024
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Committee	20 May 2024
Communities and Place Committee	22 May 2024
Climate Change Committee	23 May 2024
City of Inverness Area Committee	27 May 2024

Gaelic Committee	29 May 2024
Comataidh na Gaidhlig	29 An Ceitean
Education Committee	30 May 2024
Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee	3 June 2024
Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee	3 June 2024
Corporate Resources Committee	6 June 2024
*Economy and Infrastructure Committee (Special)	11 June 2024
Audit Committee	13 June 2024
Nairnshire Committee (Special)	24 June 2024
Pensions Committee (Special)	24 June 2024

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

Black Isle and Easter Ross Committee

***Starred Item: Item 5 – Invergordon Common Good Fund – Consultation on the Proposal to sell the Bust of Sir John Gordon**

Ms Atkin expressed reservations that insufficient opportunity had been provided to the people of Invergordon to respond to the consultation on the sale of the Bust, evidenced by the relatively low number of responses received. She emphasised the historical, cultural, and artistic importance of the Bust and felt that time-limited efforts should be made to ensure that, if it was sold, it remained in the country.

Ms Smith responded that the sale of the Bust had been debated locally for many years and the support in the community for its sale was clear from the results of the consultation and from social media. She emphasised the much needed benefits the sale would provide to Invergordon, giving specific examples of projects the funding could be used for, and pointing out that the capital receipt from the sale of around £2.5m could provide a revenue income stream of £50k to £125k, depending on investment opportunities and interest rates. In addition to the capital receipt, a replica Bust would be provided which, along with the story of the Bust, would still attract visitors. It was also emphasised that the value of the Bust was because of the French sculptor, rather than the subject of the Bust, which was of interest locally. Several Members voiced support for Ms Smith.

Ms L Johnston, seconded by Ms M Smith, **MOVED** to agree that the proposal to dispose of the Bust of Sir John Gordon by sale should go ahead, and that recommendation iv.d be removed as it was not legally enforceable.

Ms S Atkin, seconded by Ms T Collier, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, that the Council, on behalf of the Invergordon Common Good Fund:-

- i. seek a second expert opinion in the process; and
- ii. find an alternative solution that would keep the work available for the public in this country e.g. by talking to the National Heritage Memorial Fund or others, with the aim of still providing Invergordon with the proceeds of any sale. This process would be time-limited for a period of three months from September 2024.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 50 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 4 votes, with 10 abstentions. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the Motion:

Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr J Bruce, Mr M Cameron, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms L Dundas, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green, Mr D Gregg, Mrs J Hendry, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr P Logue, Mr D Louden, Ms M MacCallum, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr D McDonald, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Ms M Ross, Ms M Smith, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Ms S Atkin, Ms T Collier, Mr W MacKay, Mr R MacKintosh.

Abstentions:

Mr B Boyd, Ms H Crawford, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Millar, Mr C Munro, Mr P Oldham, Mr R Stewart.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that the proposal to dispose of the Bust of Sir John Gordon by sale should go ahead, and that recommendation iv.d be removed as it was not legally enforceable.

Caithness Committee

***Starred Item: Item 9 – Consultation on Proposal to Dispose by Ribbon Leases of Small Parcels of Common Good Land at Riverside Park (south of River Wick)**

The Council **AGREED** that the proposal to dispose by ribbon leases of small parcels of land at Riverside Park go ahead.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee (Special)

***Starred Item: Item 5 – Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Full Business Case**

The Council **APPROVED** the Full Business Case for the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport as shown in Appendix 1 of the report to allow for submission to the UK and Scottish Governments.

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of Item 4.iii as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and employee of NHS Highland respectively. However, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

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

- i. Redesign Board held on 29 May 2024 which were **APPROVED**;
- ii. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held on 9 February 2024 (approved by the Board on 20 June 2024) which were **NOTED**;
- iii. Community Planning Board held on 1 March 2024 (approved by the Board on 5 June 2024) which were **NOTED**;

- iv. Recruitment Panel: Assistance Chief Executives held on 29 April 2024 which were **APPROVED**; and
- v. Investment Sub Committee held on 20 March 2024 which were **NOTED** and 28 May 2024 which were **APPROVED**.

**5. Question Time
Am Ceiste**

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

Public Questions

(1) Mr D Garvie

To the Leader of the Council

SSEN has submerged the Highland Council area in a multiplicity of different network enhancement proposals. Although all are inter-connected in some way or another, and although many will have a mutually cumulative combined effect, there has been no presentation from SSEN of the combined effect – over the whole area – of all its proposals.

SSEN is a large corporation with many paid employees and experts engaged full-time in preparing these proposals. Adversely affected communities have good reason to contest many of the claims made by SSEN in its presentation of its proposals. Communities only have unpaid volunteers, many giving up significant amounts of personal time, and without the benefit of the expert technical and legal input which SSEN has to hand. It seems therefore that the planning process is inherently flawed and biased and will remain so unless the consultation process is changed to support local community groups to enable them to engage more effectively.

How does Highland Council intend to ensure that adequate focus and attention is given to the inputs from affected communities – which are the lifeblood of the Highland Council’s area – in its objective assessment of whether planning permission should be granted for each of SSEN’s many proposed developments?

The response had been circulated.

(2) Ms D Peacock

To the Leader of the Council

Context: SSEN has a statutory obligation to conduct “meaningful consultation” with stakeholders who might be affected by its proposed developments. The Scottish Government states that “Engaging with citizens and stakeholder organisations in order to influence policy making is a key part of the Scottish Approach and is fully supported by ministers”. The Gunning Principles were established in 1985 to provide some definition of what is required to constitute “meaningful consultation”.

SSEN has consistently failed to follow these principles and has NOT conducted “meaningful consultation”. Instead, it has been applying a wilful policy of “decide and defend”. On 12th March 2024 five Community Councils in the Beaully area refused to continue to participate in routine liaison meetings with SSEN – which had been going on for more than 10 years – due to the superficial nature of SSEN’s approach to

meaningful consultation. SSEN's failure to consult meaningfully was also highlighted and recognised during the debate following Motion S6M-12842 in the Scottish Parliament on 15th April 2024.

How does Highland Council propose to address the consequences of SSEN's failure to follow its statutory duty to conduct meaningful consultation, as this failure on SSEN's part has left communities without any effective input to assessment of what may – or what may not – be acceptable in development of the electricity distribution network necessary to meet foreseeable future energy demand?

The response had been circulated.

(3) Mr I Lyons

To the Leader of the Council

Tourism is a vital source of income, of employment, and of economic activity in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. The Draft Sustainable Tourism Strategy discussed at the Highland Council meeting on 2nd May 2024 confirmed that tourism attracts circa 7 million visitors per annum to the region, generates around £1.6 billion of economic income, and supports around 25,000 jobs. The Draft Strategy also places much emphasis on the importance of the unspoiled natural environment in making the most of current and future tourism opportunities. According to the Nation Brands Index 2023, "... a country's natural beauty is the most important reputational aspect driving the desire to visit a nation."

Given the economic importance of tourism for the area, and the significance of our unspoiled natural environment to continuing to attract visitors to the area:

What steps has the council taken to measure and mitigate the impact of the proposed new electricity supply infrastructure including the multiple new overhead pylon lines and new substation proposals, on the communities affected – particularly in relation to business and employment opportunities for the local businesses that rely on tourism.

The response had been circulated.

Member Questions

(4) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

At Council on the 9th May I asked what processes and briefings you could put in place to ensure that all Councillors were up to date with what is happening at CoSLA. You undertook to look into the matter and I should be grateful if you could now update us all as to what solutions you have to address this matter.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, as discussed at a previous Council meeting, CoSLA played a very important role in how the Council was ran and Members should be aware of what had happened within CoSLA. It was asked if the Leader would agree to an item being included in the next Corporate Resources Committee after a reply had been received from the President of CoSLA on how it could be ensured that there was better visibility on CoSLA leader matters.

In response, the Leader explained that he understood the frustration that was caused by the inability to discuss matters of the CoSLA agenda. Cllr Christie's suggestion was welcomed for this item to be included in the Corporate Resources agenda after a response had been received from CoSLA.

(5) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

Please could the Leader detail by school establishment all vacant teaching posts?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(6) Mr P Logue

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

What is the Council's position on the spacing of caravans on council premises, including car parks, bearing in mind SFRS guidance stating that caravans should be at least 6 metres apart and well away from parked cars.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, given the answer provided by the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure, it was queried how this was enforced, as there were a number of places which were used for overnight habitation which were in contravention of the six-metre spacing rule.

In response, the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure intimated that the answer would be circulated to Members.

(7) Mr R Stewart

To the Chair of Education

In light of the Cass Report's recommendations on the best-evidenced care for gender-distressed children, could the Chair of Education address whether the council will now withdraw the Scottish Government's "Supporting Transgender Pupils in Schools: Guidance for Scottish Schools," which advises affirmation for gender distressed children and leads to staff socially transitioning children, and issue new guidance?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, given that the Scottish Government had made it clear that the legal liability from disregarding Dr Cass' Report rested with teachers and the local authority, would it be acknowledged that the guidance was not best practice and agreed to update it to ensure the protection of teachers and our vulnerable children.

In response, concern was raised about how the question was phrased, as it promoted a degree of ambiguity. The Scottish Government guidelines did not advise affirmation for gender for anyone. The guidelines showed how to support a child who had chosen

to go down the route of gender affirmation and the Cass Report detailed information about healthcare provision and Clinics, this did not include Schools. Healthcare guidance was separate from that used in Education. The Highland Council followed Education Scotland's guidance in their Schools, and this would be updated if guidance had changed.

(8) Mr D Gregg

To the Chair of Education

One of my residents requested a deferral for their child starting primary school.

Two months later, they asked for a timetable for when they'd get a decision. Two months later, they finally got a response confirming deferral had been approved.

By this time, their child had started the transition process to secondary school, despite the parents wishes for deferral. The length of time, and lack of adequate communication from the council, has distressed them and their child at a very important time of their child's life. It is unacceptable it took four months to give these parents a decision, and unacceptable to not even give them a date for when they might hear.

Please could the council provide details of the average length of time it is taking us to process parental requests for deferring their child's entry into P1 either by ASG, or an alternative geographic breakdown if more convenient.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, as it was suggested that these issues should be raised directly with the service, would it be possible to raise this case with the Chair and officers to improve dealing with instances like this in the future. The delay that was caused in this case was partly due to a lack of Educational Psychologists, but communication in this case could have been improved and this was not caused by a lack of resource.

In response, the Chair of Education agreed that this would be raised with officers following the July recess.

(9) Mr R Gale

To the Chair of Education

Following the release of the joint statement (see below) from the various teaching unions relating to the call upon the Scottish Government and Local Authorities to ensure that the needs of our most vulnerable children are fully met, can you confirm that you endorse their efforts on this matter and agree with the views they have put forward in the statement?

Joint Statement on Additional Support Needs (ASN)

We support the Scottish Government's commitment to 'getting it right for every child' to provide all children, young people and their families with the right support at the right time; so that every child and young person in Scotland can reach their full potential.

- 1 *The Education (ASL) (Scotland) Act 2004 places various duties on education authorities related to the provision of school education for children and young people with additional support needs belonging to their area. Education authorities must:*
 - *make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required for each child or young person with additional support needs for whose school education they are responsible.*
 - *make arrangements to identify additional support needs.*
 - *keep under consideration the additional support needs identified and the adequacy of support provided to meet the needs of each child or young person.*
- 2 *We, the undersigned, record our concern that the proportion of Scotland's pupils with an identified Additional Support Need (ASN) has risen from 6.5% in 2009 to 37% in 2023 without a corresponding increase in resources to support this level of need. We have seen the level and complexity of additional support needs grow, whilst poverty continues to extend its crippling grip across families in Scotland, intensifying in the midst of the cost-of-living crisis, with hunger, fuel and digital poverty now impacting more than one in three children in some areas. We believe that the Scottish Government has not provided sufficient funding to allow local authorities to make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support required for each child or young person with additional support needs.*
- 3 *The current climate of under-investment in Additional Support for Learning is now having an impact across the whole learning population and is detrimental to the wellbeing of children and young people; the wellbeing of school staff; and the educational experience for many pupils.*

The final report of the National Discussion on Education highlighted the imperative for 'adequate sustained funding to provide staffing and specialist resources to be able to achieve the commitment to inclusivity and [meet] the needs of each learner, with a particular urgency for children and young people identified as having Additional Support Needs'. Yet we continue to witness efforts to evade discourse around the crucial issue of resourcing.

The Scottish Government and education authorities must face up to the challenge and invest in Scottish Education to deliver the promises of inclusive practice made to young people and their families twenty years ago and which continues to be framed in current legislation.

We call on the Scottish Government and all education authorities to put in place the requisite additional staffing and resources to fully implement the relevant legal duties and commitments in practice for all pupils with additional support needs, and in so doing, improve the quality of education provision and wellbeing for those children and young people, and improve the working conditions, health, safety and wellbeing of the teachers and support staff who work with them.

1 <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>

2 <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-childrens-learning-statutory-guidance-educationadditional-support-learning-scotland/pages/2/>

AHDS: Greg Dempster, General Secretary
Connect: Gavin Yates, Executive Director
EIS: Andrea Bradley, General Secretary
Glasgow City Parents Group: Leanne McGuire, Chairperson
GMB: Keir Greenaway, Scotland senior organiser in public services
NASUWT: Mike Corbett, NASUWT Scotland Official
NPFS: Cheryl Burnett, Chair, NPFS
SLS: Graham Hutton, General Secretary
SSTA: Seamus Searson, General Secretary
UNISON Lilian Macer, Scotland Regional Secretary
UNITE Graham McNab, Lead Officer, Local Authorities.

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(10) Mr A Graham

To the Leader of the Council

Charleston Academy: The inclusion of the Academy in the Highland Investment Plan as a Phase One, Years 1-10 project with potential delivery within 3 to 5 years, subject to the availability and profiling of funding, was very encouraging after the acute disappointment when the Capital Programme was revised in September 2023.

Can you advise what steps are now being taken with the design and construction in order to achieve delivery within the 3 to 5 years' timescale?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the local community was anxious about the new Charleston academy being developed as soon as possible. On a scale of 0 to 10, wherein 0 was very unlikely and 10 was highly likely, it was asked how likely the Leader saw that a new school would be built within 3 to 5 years?

In response, the Leader explained that this situation would be monitored and updated regularly to understand the progress of the many commitments which the Council had made and the progress of the investment plan.

(11) Mr C Ballance

To the Leader of the Council

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of Item 5 (11) as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Have you signed the Highland NHS' Charter for Climate, Nature and Health?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the NHS Charter for Climate, Nature and Health looked at how we acknowledged the impact of climate change on the natural environment and how that could affect our own health. The Director of Public Health,

Dr Tim Allison had stated that 'it was imperative that we work together to nurture and protect the natural environment that keep us well, and this Charter gave us a chance to commit ourselves and each other'. Could the Leader personally sign the Charter and encourage all Members to do so.

In response, the Leader stated that he would be happy to look at this with Cllr Ballance. It was noted however that Members would come to their own conclusions on signing the Charter. The Leader suggested that future strategy could be based on the context of the ecology strategy and this document could be used to relate to the Charter.

(12) Mrs I MacKenzie

To the Leader of the Council

I ask that the Highland Council consider installing bins for compostable items situated in Inverness, which then can be put to a composting site here, the compost can then be used locally. As all compostable items are either currently put to general waste or cups are collected at additional cost and sent down the road to Central belt or further.

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(13) Mr R MacKintosh

To the Leader of the Council

Please list the annual amount spent by Highland Council from its own funds, annually, each year from 2021 and for 2019/20, the last year before covid.

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

6. Membership of the Council Ballrachd na Comhairle

The Council **NOTED** that, following the By-Election for Ward 7 held on 13 June 2024, Ms Laura Dundas was elected as a Member of the Council.

The Council **NOTED** that:-

- i. Mrs E McAllister had tendered her resignation as a Member of the Council with effect from 28 June 2024; and
- ii. Mrs P Munro and Ms M Nolan had tendered their resignations as Members of the Council with effect from 31 July 2024.

In this regard, By-Election for Ward 14 (Inverness Central) and Ward 6 (Cromarty Firth) would be held on Thursday 26 September 2024.

Appreciation and recognition across the Chamber were expressed to the dedication and hard work of Councillors McAllister, Munro and Nolan. The role of an Elected Member was not easy but they had carried out their role with care and compassion for their constituents and they were wished well for the future.

It was however recognised that this current Council had lost two young Elected Members due to work commitments and the Council **AGREED** the Governance Steering Group be tasked with exploring what could be done to support young Elected Members.

7. **Membership of Committees etc** **Ballrachd Chomataidhean msaa**

As a result of the By-Election the political make-up of the Council was now as follows:-

SNP – 21 / Highland Independent – 18 / Scottish Liberal Democrats – 14 / Scottish Conservative and Unionist – 8 / Highland Alliance – 6 / Scottish Green Party – 4 / Labour – 2 / Alba Party – 1

The formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees remained as 5/5/4/2/2.

The Council also **NOTED** the appointment of Ms Laura Dundas (Ward 7) to the North Planning Applications Committee.

8. **Appointments** **Cur an Dreuchd**

a) **Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited**

Following the resignation from the Company of Mr A MacDonald, the Council **AGREED** to appoint Mrs M Reid as a new Director for Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited.

(b) **Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group**

The Council **AGREED** that Mrs A MacLean replace Ms M Nolan on the Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group, as requested by the Scottish Liberal Democrat Group.

(c) **Vice Chair of Housing and Property**

Following the resignation of Mr L Fraser as Vice Chair of Housing and Property, the Council **AGREED** to appoint Ms S Atkin to replace him.

9. **Annual Accounts for the year to 31 March 2024 and Near-final revenue outturn for the year**

Cunntasan bliadhna airson na bliadhna gu 31 Màrt 2024 agus aithisg fìor chosgais faisg air deireannach airson na bliadhna

There had been circulated Report No. HC/17/24 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

Thanks were extended to the Head of Corporate Finance and his Service for their efforts during the implementation of the new financial system, in addition to handling normal year end processes and the production of this report.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the general reserves had increased this year but it was felt that this would not be the case next year;

- the budget out-turn was within a fraction of one percent, which showed how well the team was managing the finances; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, in terms of section 6 of the report, namely the £1.122m net underspend and the £26.312m net increase in general fund reserves. It was asked how much of the £23.270m agreed reserves was actually used and how much was re-designated as ear-marked reserves because of spending decisions or priorities.

The Council:-

- i. received and **APPROVED** the unaudited Annual Accounts for the Highland Council, Highland Council Charitable Trust Funds and the Highland Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2024 and **NOTED** that these would be presented to the appointed auditor by the prescribed date of 30 June 2024; and
- ii. **NOTED** the near final out-turn for the 2023/24 financial year, subject to audit, as set out in section 6 of the report.

10. Social Values Charter for Renewables Investment Cairt Luachan Sòisealta airson Tasgadh So-ùrachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, who gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the work that had gone into developing the proposed Social Values Charter, which was long overdue and would provide a means of capturing the wealth of the Highlands for the people of the Highlands;
- the Charter would not provide an easier route through the planning process for developers. All planning applications would go through the same scrutiny process as at present and planning policy would be applied in line with legislation and Council guidelines;
- as set out in paragraph 5.4 of the report, National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4), Policy 11, stated that all renewable development proposals should maximise net economic impact, including local and community socio-economic benefits, and the Charter was needed to help guide investment in Highland;
- community benefit was currently £5,000 per megawatt hour (MWh) and the Charter would ask developers to agree to provide an additional £7,500 per MWh which would be paid into a strategic fund that would benefit all of Highland. In addition, strong representations were being made to government asking that legislation be brought forward to make such payments mandatory in future;
- the proposed approach, which tied in with the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy, had been trialled at the recent Green Energy Conference in Inverness and had been well received by the industry sector. However, other Members questioned whether this was an appropriate level of consultation;
- the Charter was a major first step in terms of securing significant income that would be shared throughout all Highland communities for generations to come and, going forward, the Council would work with public and private sector stakeholders and community representatives to agree, manage and monitor the effectiveness of the strategic fund to ensure the benefits were applied in line with Highland priorities;
- it was welcomed that the community benefit team would be separate from the planning team;

- as the Charter was developed and implemented it would be important that communities were engaged, as outlined in section 4.3 of the report;
- Mr D Fraser proposed that the first sentence in paragraph 17.2 of the report be amended to “Should the Charter be agreed, work will begin to embed this as an approach to business across Highland and raise awareness of its aims and purpose with investors, developers *and communities*.” This was accepted as an addition to the recommendations;
- the Charter was for all renewables and it would be useful to see further guidance on how it would be applied to pump storage schemes and battery storage;
- community benefit needed to be mandatory and indexed in accordance with the wholesale price of electricity. It was also suggested that demands should be made for a fixed percentage of turnover, 5-10% for example;
- in relation to offshore renewables, it was suggested further research be undertaken to ensure appropriate revenue was received for marine assets within 12 miles of the shore;
- the proposed Charter could shape Highland for many years to come and, given its importance and the appetite amongst communities to be involved, it was imperative there was a robust, inclusive and transparent consultation, as there had been on other Council proposals, before a final decision was made. In addition, it was suggested that holistic mapping of all applications for renewable developments should be undertaken by the Council and presented to communities together with the wording of the Charter to enable them to make an informed response to the consultation. Other Members added their support to the call for consultation, referring to representations received from concerned members of the community as well as industry stakeholders, and the far-reaching consequences for communities and the Highland environment;
- in relation to how developer contributions would be split between the community fund and the strategic fund, it was suggested that the largest share should go to the community fund as the impact of any development was on the community. It was also suggested that the total developer contribution should be greater than £12,500 per MWh, and it would be good to know the views of communities on these matters;
- for some communities the Charter would be looked upon as good news but for others grappling with a significant number of applications for renewable developments it would be perceived as devastating;
- it was questioned how it was intended to bring people on board and why it was considered developers would comply with the Charter when they had not complied with previous Council policies and strategies in respect of community benefit which had specified that payments would appreciate annually in line with the UK Retail Price Index;
- in response to Members’ concerns, it was reiterated that the Charter would not form part of Planning Applications Committees (PACs) relating to any form of renewable energy scheme. Whether renewable developments were approved or not was a matter for PACs: the Charter was about maximising the benefits of approved developments, and it was important not to conflate the two aspects. Whilst welcoming this reassurance, Members added that the Council’s dual role as Planning Authority and beneficiary of increased developer payments had raised concerns from communities and industry regarding fairness, objectivity and compliance with planning targets;
- whilst supportive of the core aim of the Charter, reservations were expressed regarding the process that had led to its development, and the lack of consultation and engagement, not only with communities but with Elected Members. It was also questioned whether the Council was the most appropriate body to take forward the Charter;

- attention was drawn to the four investment priorities set out in section 9.2 of the report, and it was suggested that environment and biodiversity should be added. Similarly, there was no mention of culture and the arts, and it was suggested there was an opportunity for a dedicated education and cultural fund as cultural access in Highland communities was very unequal;
- NPF4 was about tackling not only the climate crisis but the nature crisis;
- Ms K Willis proposed the following addition to the amendment by Mr A Christie: “Given the implications of a Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment, agree to undertake a Members workshop regarding the draft Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment.” This was accepted by Mr Christie;
- developers were currently paying an average of £3,000 per MWh, less than the recommended amount of £5,000, which was depriving Highland communities of approximately £5m annually;
- the voluntary nature of the Charter limited its effectiveness and consistency of application across different renewable projects. Without mandatory compliance there was no guarantee developers would adhere to the proposals and pay higher contributions;
- there was no such thing as a “just transition” for some of the communities burdened with renewable energy infrastructure, and some communities simply did not want any more development regardless of the amount of community benefit;
- in response to a question, it was explained that the public consultation referred to in a previous Committee report was in respect of the Community Wealth Building Strategy and that was currently underway;
- reference having been made to the aging population, it was questioned how the legacy housing referred to in the report was going to help older people, and the need for age-friendly communities was emphasised;
- it was necessary to lobby government, not only to make community benefit payments mandatory, as previously mentioned, but for grid connection priority for community organisations as this was becoming an issue in many communities. It was also necessary to encourage the government to support more offshore developments rather than onshore projects which were an easier option for developers;
- it was necessary to increase support to communities looking to take forward community energy projects, and to deliver actual housing, not serviced sites, as part of any developments that went ahead;
- thanks were expressed to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place for responding to Members’ queries in advance of the meeting and alleviating concerns, and for the presentation which had provided some context and clarified a number of points;
- reference was made to previous calls for a Highland Renewable Energy Group, which could have addressed many of the issues being discussed;
- renewable energy was about removing reliance on fossil fuels, and it was disappointing that government guidance and legislation covering many of the issues raised by Members had not already been introduced;
- maximising the benefits of renewable energy developments was not just about cash contributions but about creating long-lasting jobs, and it was necessary to enter into negotiations on shared ownership to guarantee revenues in and across Highland communities for decades to come;
- the public did not have all the information they needed, and it was necessary to make every effort to engage positively with communities and work with developers to understand the scale of development coming forward in order to then consider how to maximise the opportunities;
- consultation was not only about gathering views but was an opportunity to clearly explain the Council’s proposals and the rationale behind them;

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- it would make sense for the community benefit rate to be linked to the financial mechanism by which energy generators were paid and information was sought, and provided, as to how the proposed total figure of £12,500 per MWh had been arrived at;
- it was important to recognise that addressing climate change was not without cost, and some communities had been affected much more than others by renewable energy developments;
- it was vital that officers could immediately begin to implement the Charter so opportunities did not continue to be missed;
- community projects had the ability to deliver significantly greater levels of community benefit – i.e. £170,000 per MWh, 34 times the standard payment of £5,000 per MWh;
- it was necessary to consider the value of community benefit derived from different models of delivery, and the Assistant Chief Executive – Place’s comments on local energy schemes were welcomed;
- in response to questions, it was confirmed that the Charter document would cease to be a draft if it was approved today. However, it could evolve over time to reflect the input of Members and communities;
- the Charter was good news for communities that did not currently have access to funding such as a Common Good Fund or Community Benefit Fund;
- it was necessary to convey to communities that renewable energy developments were going to continue to happen as they were needed to achieve Net Zero, and it was important to maximise the benefits to Highland;
- further information was sought, and provided, in relation to the Housing theme, such as what constituted a large-scale renewable energy development, what would count as a proportionate housing development, what would happen if an investor did not wish to provide legacy housing, whether housing provision would reduce or replace cash contributions, and what would happen if a community wanted a cash contribution rather than new housing;
- reference was made to the historic hydro endowment scheme which had allowed communities to benefit from the introduction of the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board by paying less for electricity and retaining profits;
- in Europe, some energy producers were being required to pay community benefit of up to £25,000 per MWh, and it was necessary to grasp the opportunity for investment renewable energy presented;
- attention was drawn to paragraph 17.5 of the report, which set out the proposals for developing the approach to the strategic fund. This included the creation of a partnership group comprising Elected Members, public and private sector partners and community representatives, and the development of a strategic plan to identify core criteria for the distribution of funds. The strategic plan would take into account the Council’s Programme and the Highland Investment Plan, as well as the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan priorities, and it was emphasised that many of these programmes and plans were a result of community consultation;
- Scotland was one of many nations that had committed to ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future powered by renewable energy as the transition to Net Zero was made;
- those who benefited from Highland’s resources had to accept the stewardship of its infrastructure and communities;
- community benefit funds had been invaluable to the communities that had been recipients, but it was necessary to ensure that support was more equitable to deliver a just transition for all, and to think creatively and inclusively about how to distribute the benefits associated with renewable energy;

- directly consulting communities on proposed developments took place as part of the planning process;
- given the proposed Charter was a living document and community benefit contributions were voluntary, it was questioned why it could not be implemented and put out for consultation, with a further debate at a later date to finalise it; and
- reference was made to instances of developers paying community benefit for a limited time, and it was suggested it was necessary to include a requirement that payments continue to be made for the life of any development. It was also queried how retrospective contributions could be sought from those who were not paying.

Following summing up, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mrs G Campbell Sinclair, **MOVED** the recommendations in the report including the proposed addition by Mr D Fraser.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Christie, seconded by Ms H Crawford, moved the following, which included the suggested addition by Ms K Willis:-

1. Agree the Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment set out at Appendix 1 is designated a draft.
2. Agree that the draft Charter be submitted for public and community stakeholder consultation with a closing date to enable Council to make a final decision on the Charter no later than the 31st October 2024.
3. That to enable a wide, inclusive and meaningful consultation that part of the information provided will include options around the level and allocation of financial benefit between the Community and Strategic Funds together with a mapping of all known and pipeline projects that are in the public domain.
4. Agree the next steps to progressing this approach and that a paper on the development of the Strategic Partnership and funding management models will be prepared and agreed by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee as soon as practicable after the final decision on the Charter.
5. Given the implications of a Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment, agree to undertake a Members workshop regarding the draft Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 38 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 24 votes, with 1 abstention. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

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

For the Amendment:

Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr A Jarvie, Mr A Graham, Mr J Grafton, Mr D Gregg, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr D McDonald, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Ms M Smith, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

Abstentions:

Mr T MacLennan

DecisionThe Council **AGREED**:-

- i. the Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment set out at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. the immediate use of this Charter in all engagement with renewable energy investors in Highland;
- iii. the next steps to progressing this approach and that a paper on the development of the Strategic Partnership and funding management models be prepared and agreed by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee as soon as practicable; and
- iv. work begin to embed this as an approach to business across Highland and raise awareness of its aims and purpose with investors, developers and communities.

11. Highland Investment Plan – Next Steps
Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd – Ath Cheumannan

Transparency Statement: Mr D Gregg made a Transparency Statement in respect of Item 11 as an employee of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which invited Members to approve decisions to progress the implementation of the £2 billion Highland investment plan.

Following commentary on the report by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, the following main points were raised in discussion:-

- this was a long term investment plan for roads, schools and other capital investment projects in Highland and the report sought approval to implement the plan. Many Members wanted to see quick progress on the plan particularly in relation to essential works at Beauly, St Clement's, Nairn Academy and Dunvegan schools and continued road infrastructure investment. Progress on the plan would be monitored regularly and there was also a commitment to communicate progress with communities.
- there was a clear funding strategy in place to deliver the projects in the plan and ensured the plan was both affordable and sustainable for the Council into the future. This was a new positive approach to deliver projects for communities across Highland;
- it was felt that some of the phase 1 projects for delivery were more likely to be implemented in the longer term rather than short term as detailed in the report and that there required to be more honesty when detailing progress. For example, the rapid roads repairs team did not appear to have been much of a success;
- there was a need to ensure that the Council communicated with stakeholder groups in a transparent way that gave them clearer timeframes for completion of projects and information on how this would be done was requested;
- it was welcomed that Inshes roundabout, Inverness had been included in the re-profiled capital programme;

- in terms of investment on roads £20.7m would be spent in 2024/25 and around £21m in each of the financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27. This investment in roads would be widely welcomed. The investment in additional structures budget would provide vital improvements to ensure communities would have connectivity. There had been difficulties with the rapid road repair team due to recruitment challenges. A new infrared process for road repairs was being trialled and had good results so far;
- stakeholder engagement in the approach to developing school projects was welcomed. It was vital that stakeholder groups be retained when considering the master planning approach and considering a community hub, as local knowledge was needed from both community and school representatives. Local Members also needed to be involved in the place based master planning activities being undertaken and it was requested that reports were submitted to both Area Business Meetings and Area Committees as local plans were developed;
- in terms of the revised capital programme, reference was made to Broadford Primary which was a local based master plan that would see a library and service point co-located in the new building. It was suggested that the new Broadford School could be used as a pilot project for other similar projects in Highland. Also, that the Council made it a priority to work with the South Skye Community Campus Group and Sports Scotland to help them to achieve their ambitions which were aligned to the Highland Investment Plan, the Council's Sports Strategy and the Scottish Government's Islands Plan;
- in terms of the Dunvegan master plan detailed in the report, which consisted of a school, adjacent housing and a community sports pitch with a new shared access road, it was asked that support from the Council was also given to this project. Both projects at Broadford and Dunvegan should be bundled into one contract to achieve best value;
- the new Broadford School was badly needed and should be progressed as quickly as possible. In terms of the Dunvegan project, the school element should be expedited given how important this was given the poor state of the current school. Further, the view was expressed that it was a sad reflection on the Council that more money was planned to be spent on active travel than St Clement's, Beaully and Dunvegan schools combined;
- in terms of the community point of delivery approach, Fort William was in the early stages of the mapping process to support the Council's aspirations for delivering an effective Community point of delivery approach and there would be engagement with Members as proposals were developed;
- in terms of the area roads allocation, this was largely allocated on the same basis as last year and also Officer intelligence on feedback on the state of the road network and outcomes of the Scottish roads maintenance survey;
- reference was made to the significant money to be spent on roads and bridges and a relatively small amount on buses. It was queried how this would meet the Council's commitment to net zero carbon emissions;
- in terms of consultation on the plan, the view was expressed that some communities were angry that the Council did not consult on plans affecting them. Some communities were working hard on their own aspirations but the Council did not seem to be engaging with them on these. Communities needed to be part of the process of the investment plan;
- better investment in bus shelters was requested in the investment plan going forward;
- the planned investment in a new Nairn Academy was acknowledged;
- there was a very small investment for war memorials in the plan and it was requested that more money be invested on this going forward. Also, the significant investment in the Longman travelling people's site was welcomed;

- the opportunity to explore private investment in the education estate was a great initiative;
- Fortrose Academy inclusion in the plan was commended and showed that considering projects in terms of need would produce the best outcomes for the school estate. It was welcomed that there would be investment in maintaining buildings in the Council school estate on an ongoing basis; and
- progress on implementing the investment plan would be determined on the ability to pay for it. If the Council had access to funds from the energy profits and electricity generator levies the plan could be delivered sooner. An undertaking was given to find out where the money gained from these taxes was going.

Thereafter, the Council:-

- NOTED** the Highland Investment Plan Communication Process as detailed at section 4 of the report and attached as Appendix 1 to the report;
- NOTED** the local engagement process with communities and partners as set out in section 5 of the report and attached as Appendix 2 to the report, to deliver inclusive, sustainable project outcomes;
- NOTED** the place-based master-planning approach being applied to support the option appraisal process for delivering new Community Points of Delivery (PODs), across Highland, as referenced throughout section 6 of the report, along with the visual design slides attached as Appendix 3 to the report;
- AGREED** the additional funding for the Nairn Academy project as outlined in Paragraph 6.2.4 of the report;
- AGREED** the additional funding for the essential works at Beaully Primary and St Clement's Schools and the access road at Dunvegan Primary School as outlined in Paragraph 6.2.6 of the report;
- AGREED** the priorities and timescales for the Phase 1 Community POD locations at Dingwall and Thurso as outlined in Paragraph 6.4.6 of the report;
- AGREED** the roads and infrastructure funding allocations as set out in section 7 (Table 4) of the report, noting that schemes might require to be adjusted throughout the duration of the programme for operational reasons;
- AGREED** the re-profiled Capital Programme to reflect changes since September 2023 as detailed in Section 8 and Appendix 4 of the report; and
- NOTED** the work being done to develop options for future procurement routes and that a further report would come forward when this work was complete.

12. Adoption of Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 Gabhail ri Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Linne Mhoireibh A-staigh 2

There had been circulated Report No. HC/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to Members and officers who had worked tirelessly on this project;
- it was emphasised that Members had no power to determine where a developer chose to submit a planning application for a housing development; and
- a list or appendix would be kept to identify when the status of certain sites changed from their original designation within the plan and made available to the public.

The Council **AGREED** the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 be adopted incorporating the Reporters' Modifications following the Plan's Examination and the minor textual amendment required by the Scottish Government.

13. Declaring the Highland Housing Challenge and Identifying Solutions to Resolve It

A' Foillseachadh Dùbhlán Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd agus a' Comharrachadh Fhuasglaidhean

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of Item 13 as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/21/24 by Chief Executive.

Following a detailed presentation, Members raised the following main points:-

- the pandemic, cost of living crisis and a range of major issues and other factors had impacted on an already pressurised housing system in Highland;
- recent successes in Highland included the allocation of over 1,700 secure, accessible and affordable social tenancies through the Highland Housing Register in 2023, and delivery of new house building with on average 500 affordable homes being built year on year;
- in relation to homelessness, the time households were spending in temporary accommodation had been reduced, despite an increase nationally. The Council had also been at the forefront of initiatives for open market house purchases and bringing empty homes back into use;
- the Highland Housing Challenge was ambitious and plans to deliver 24,000 homes over the next ten years highlighted the scale of the challenge;
- the delivery of more housing had to be a collective priority given the clear demand for both social and private housing and there were major decisions ahead as to how to significantly increase the pace and scale of delivery;
- the above included the need to unlock infrastructure constraints, increase investment and develop potential guarantee schemes, speed up the development process and identify innovative solutions;
- housing was integral to major investment opportunities such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, and it was recognised investors required assurance that incoming workers would have a variety of housing choices to attract them into the area;
- collaboration was required across the housing system and joined up action with the Scottish Government, UK Government, registered social landlords, major businesses, community groups and other housing sector partners was critical;
- the proposals were closely linked with the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and Local Members, communities and constituents in Lochaber and other areas of Highland required an assurance that investment and house building would not be focused mainly on the Inner Moray Firth. In this regard, the geographical distribution of housing developments would be closely observed going forward;
- there were challenges facing the Council in identifying the scale of hidden housing demand outwith the Highland Housing Register in areas of Highland, and the impact the lack of housing for workers had on growing the economy in those areas;
- the initiatives in relation to flexible ownership of housing and maximising the supply of land for housing was welcomed;

- the draw of affordable housing and housing options in terms of retaining and attracting young people to work and live in the Highlands could not be underestimated, particularly in the context of a national housing crisis;
- more mid-market rent models and shared equity opportunities for young people would reduce the numbers on the Highland Housing Register and make a crucial contribution to growing the economy and to society;
- concern was expressed at the high cost of new house building in Highland but there were opportunities, through economies of scale, to command lower cost tenders and to consider modular and other forms of construction for housing;
- the fact a wide range of organisations, public agencies, partners, stakeholders and major businesses in Highland no longer provided housing had placed the burden on the local authority. The opportunities for collaboration across all these sectors to deliver innovative funding solutions for new housing development needed to be explored;
- it was important to pursue best value options and modern build methods being used to ensure the longevity of new housing development;
- as part of the Highland Housing Challenge, there was potential to revisit successful housing models used in the past such as community led initiatives;
- issues around the retention of green spaces in localities should not be a barrier to new housing development given the geography of the Highlands; and
- the need for more focus on bringing empty properties across the Highlands back into use for housing was emphasised.

The Council:-

- i. **APPROVED** the establishment of the Highland Housing Challenge as described in the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the illustrative financial position and initial modelling regarding the strategic approach to developing the HRA;
- iii. **APPROVED** that further modelling work be done to identify options for future rent modelling for the HRA;
- iv. **NOTED** the challenges faced in developing meeting the Housing Needs Demand Assessment, as described in Appendix 1 to the report;
- v. **APPROVED** the strategic objectives, which could be converted into a future Highland Housing Action Plan, as described in Appendix 3 to the report in draft form to be shared with key partners in a consultation exercise; and
- vi. **APPROVED** the establishment of a summit to mobilise partners to support our work in meeting the Highland Housing Challenge.

14. **Integrated Impact Assessment – New Approach and Process** **Measadh Buaidh Amalaichte – Dòigh-obrach agus Pròiseas Ùr**

Transparency Statements: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of this Item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and employee of NHS Highland respectively. However, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/22/24 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

It was important a collaborative approach was adopted to ensure no subjective judgements were made. Also, impact assessments would look at all various options, whether this was in relation to proposed change or even when no change/action was

proposed and, as with all aspects of Council Services, feedback from communities would be vital.

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the new integrated approach to impact assessment that had been developed across the Council, including the development of a digital tool and training materials to support the process;

and, as a result of this new approach, **AGREED**:-

- ii. the revised committee report format set out at Appendix 1 of the report, to support Members to fully consider any impacts identified;
- iii. that the Governance Review Steering Group would review Standing Orders, with a view to making recommendations to support the Council to comply with its legislative duties on consideration of impacts when decisions were being taken; and
- iv. that all Members should attend the impact assessment briefings in order to support them undertake their statutory duties.

15. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024
iaghailtean Atharrachaidh 2024 Achd an Riaghaltais Ionadail 2024 (Pàigheadh)

a. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024

There had been circulated Report No HC/23/24 by the Chief Executive.

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. the implementation of the Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 which would provide for an uplift in councillor remuneration for those roles specifically included in the regulations;
 - ii. that separate agenda recommendations proposed the same uplift applying to other senior councillors at the discretion of the Council;
 - iii. that to provide mechanisms for addressing any uplifts in future years, the next review of the Scheme of Delegation would consider revisions which could delegate authority to an appropriate officer to implement uplifts in accordance with the relevant regulations.
- b. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Communities and Place Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mr G MacKenzie and Mr H Morrison made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Communities and Place Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Communities and Place Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- c. **Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Corporate Resources Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mr D Louden and Mr C Munro made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporate Resources Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- d. **Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mr K Gowans and Mr M Green made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- e. **Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Education Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mr J Finlayson and Mr D Millar made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Education Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Education Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- f. **Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mr D Fraser and Mrs M Cockburn made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- g. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair and Vice Chair of Housing and Property Committee**

Declarations of Interest – Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Ms S Atkin made Declarations of Interest as Chair and Vice Chair of the Housing and Property Committee respectively and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair and Vice Chair of Housing and Property Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- h. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of the Leader of Inverness and Area**

Declaration of Interest – Mr I Brown made a Declaration of Interest as Leader of the City of Inverness and Area Committee and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Leader of Inverness and Area Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- i. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Leader of the Opposition**

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie made a Declaration of Interest as Leader of the Opposition and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Leader of the Opposition by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- j. Local Governance (Scotland) Act 2004 (Remuneration) Amendment Regulations 2024 – Remuneration of Chair of Audit Committee**

Members **AGREED** to uplift the remuneration of the Chair of Audit Committee by an equivalent percentage increase to that covered in the amended 2024 Regulations.

- 16. Highland Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Annual Report Cuntas às Ùr mu Chùmhnant Coimhearsnachd Feachdan na Gàidhealtachd**

Transparency Statements: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of this Item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and an employee of NHS Highland respectively. However, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Council's Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion, Councillor Niven, introduced the report and drew Members attention to the new initiative coordinated by SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity, to provide a multi-agency veterans drop in clinic, and the work being done by NHS Highland and the Council in fulfilling their obligations in regard to the Armed Forces Covenant. Thereafter, the Convener stressed the importance of recognising the debt owed to armed forces veterans and the work done by the Armed Forces Covenant to support them.

The Council **NOTED** the report.

17. Timetable of Meetings
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan airson

The Council **AGREED** that:-

- i. Climate Change Committee be moved from 3 October 2024 to 28 August 2024;
- ii. North Planning Applications Committee be moved from 10 September 2024 to 17 September 2024; and
- iii. Planning Review Body be moved to from 17 September 2024 to 24 September 2024.

The Council **NOTED** that special meetings of the Nairnshire Committee and Pensions Committee/Board had been held on the 24 June 2024.

18. Clerk to the Highland Licensing Board
Clèireach do Bhòrd Cheadachd na Gàidhealtachd

The Council **AGREED** the reappointment of Ms C McArthur as Clerk to the Highland Licensing Board.

19. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

The Council **NOTED** the circulated list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 9 May 2024.

20. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

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

21. Exclusion of the Public
Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 22 only on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

22. Update on the Senior Management Team Restructure and Next Steps in Implementation
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-structaradh an Àrd-Sgioba-Stiùiridh agus na h-Ath Cheumannan Buileachaidh

There had been circulated to Members only Confidential Report No. HC/25/24 by the Chief Executive.

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

23. Notice of Motion
Brathan Gluasaid

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

With the launch of the Highland Investment Plan and the significant proposed investment across the Highlands it is incumbent on the Council that all expenditure is done in a responsible and prudent fashion.

Given that this Council has current debt liabilities of £1.142B which is an increase of some £60M in Q4 alone and with a projected expenditure of £2B over the next 20 years this council will request that the Section 95 officer carries out an investigation into options on how future borrowing can be done in a fashion that will ensure, where possible, that all borrowing is repaid within the lifetime of the loan period. The findings and proposals of this to come back to a future Full Council meeting within this financial year.

The aim of this is to ensure that future borrowing by this Council will not result in a debt burden being left for future Councils and residents of the Highlands to address many years into the future.

Signed: Mr R Gale Mr A Christie

Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion was not anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

This Motion was withdrawn.

URGENT ITEM

National Care Service Update
Cunntas mun t-Seirbheis Chùraim Nàiseanta

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of the Urgent Item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Following a summary of the report, Councillor D Fraser made reference to the roots of the National Care Service (NCS) lying in the Feeley report. He quoted the introduction to the Feeley report and referred to the three questions it posed, namely, 'If not now, when? If not this way, how? And if not us – who?' The Scottish Government had decided to change the delivery model which had, to date, been a Lead Agency model for Highland and it was important to work with NHS Highland and third sector partners to design and implement a revised delivery model. Change brought uncertainty for staff and the people being cared for so it was vital they were consulted and kept informed throughout the process. Through experience of the Lead Agency model, a system would be developed to deliver the aims of the Feeley report involving staff, families and communities.

In addition, Councillor Graham referred to the impact on the Council and NHS Highland staff and recommended that the Chief Executive should write to the Scottish Government to express concerns about the unnecessary haste and lack of engagement.

During further discussion, other Members raised the following issues:

- attention was drawn to the challenges of island and rural communities and the benefits of an Integrated Joint Board model. Change was unsettling but it was important to design a service that was fit for all, with communities at the centre. Consultation had been undertaken with the third sector and service users;
- some Members spoke in favour of dealing with the matter through CoSLA, while others suggested that, because Highland was unique in having a Lead Agency model, it was preferable if Highland communicated directly with the Scottish Government on the matter;
- debate took place on whether it was appropriate or not for the Chief Executive to communicate directly with the Scottish Government on the matter, with some Members in favour, and others against this; and
- the loss of democratic control of significant Council and NHS functions, Adult Social Care and Children's Services to a national agency, was of concern, including the potential impact on staff. The rapid pace of the proposed changes was also of concern, as was the future scrutiny of services.

Mr D Fraser, seconded by Mrs M Cockburn, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Mr A Graham, seconded by Ms K MacLean, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that, on behalf of Council, the Chief Executive send a letter to the First Minister pointing out concern over the unnecessary haste in seeking to dismantle the Lead Agency Model, the lack of engagement with the Council over the implications associated with the removal of the Lead Agency Model, the lack of understanding on the impact of the proposed amendments to the NCS Bill will have on staff and service users and the disbenefits caused to services in remote, rural and fragile communities on the centralisation of services by transferring social care responsibility from the Council to a National Service.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 38 votes the **AMENDMENT** received 18 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore carried, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Ms S Atkin, Mr A Baldrey, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms L Dundas, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D McDonald, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Ms M Ross, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Mr M Baird, Mr C Ballance, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr R Stewart.

Abstentions:

Mrs B McAllister.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. the proposed Stage 2 amendments to the National Care Service Bill set out in Appendix 1 to the report which would result in the introduction of a single model of integration and the consequent removal of the Lead Agency Model; and
- ii. further updates providing clarity on the legal, financial and governance implications would come forward to future meetings of the Council.

The meeting ended at 4.55pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 5 August 2024, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin
Ms T Collier
Ms L Dundas
Ms L Johnston

Mr D Louden
Ms M MacCallum
Ms M Ross

Participating Officials:

Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager
Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager
Ms J Young, Community Support Officer (West and Mid)
Mr A Byrne, Principal Housing Officer – East Ross
Mr I Moncrieff, Area Roads Operations Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector Richard Ross, Police Scotland
Ms B Richmond, Project Manager, Black Isle Local Place Plan
Mr N Wright, Nick Wright Planning
Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

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

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith.

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

There were none.

3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 have not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/14/24 by Chief Inspector Calum Smith - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

Following a summary of the report, the following issues were raised during discussion:

- Police officers were thanked for their work keeping communities safe, and concern was expressed at recent outbreaks of violence against police officers in other parts of the UK;
- some community council meetings were not receiving police reports or attendance at meetings, and this would be raised with the Area Commander. It was suggested that police officers could attend a 6-monthly community council chairs' meeting to provide updates, and Members suggested that the provision of a list of police liaison officers for each community council would be helpful;
- a request was made for speed monitoring near Arabella and this would be passed on to the relevant police department;
- information was sought and provided on the following topics:
 - the reduction in Looked After children being reported as missing;
 - the lower detection rates of drivers using mobile phones;
 - increasing rates of shop-lifting;
 - how cuckooing was being tackled as part of country lines initiatives; and
 - the ACT Early initiative to help prevent exploitation of young people by extremists;
- clarification was sought and provided on the new police reporting structure;
- reference was made to the potential for people with Council tenancies being exploited for use of their premises;
- the 'coffee with a cop' initiative was popular and welcomed;
- in response to concerns about which organisation dealt with abandoned vehicles, any incidents of concerns could be reported to the police in the first instance; and
- assurance was sought and provided that police officers who were subject to violence in the line of duty were given appropriate support.

The Committee **NOTED** 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 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, and the comments made during discussion.

5. Black Isle Place Plan Plana Àite an Eilein Duibh

There had been circulated Report No BIER/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

A presentation was provided covering the background, funding, preparation, geographic reach, engagement, the vision for the future, the alignment of local and national priorities, transport issues, and ongoing community participation and governance.

During discussion, all involved in the preparation of the plan were thanked for their work and the significant levels of public engagement that had been undertaken. The Plan was a useful exemplar for other areas and, with particular reference to Easter Ross, it was anticipated other area Plans would be presented to committees by the end of the 2024-25 financial year. Delays had occurred due to the importance of ensuring the work was correctly and thoroughly undertaken, including the appropriate level of public participation.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to adopt the Plan, using it as a tool to inform and support decision making about the Black Isle;
- ii. **NOTED** Opportunity Black Isle is both a Local Place Plan in line with national Planning Legislation and an Area Place Plan in line with Highland's Place Based Framework;
- iii. **NOTED** the Plan will be taken into account in preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) as guided by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; and
- iv. **NOTED** the next steps for progressing the work set out in the plan.

6. **Winter Service Plan 2024/25** **Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members commented that the 2023-24 Plan had worked well, and they thanked front line staff for their hard work during severe winter weather. It was pointed out that some members of the public remained unsure what statutory services the Council provided in relation to winter maintenance, and attention was drawn to the leaflet and web information that was available and for which a link would be sent to Members.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25;
- ii. **AGREED** the Area Roads Operations Manager would provide Members with a link to the winter maintenance information on the Council's website; and
- iii. **AGREED** the Area Roads Operations Manager would relay the Committee's appreciation and gratitude to the winter maintenance operatives for their hard work during challenging winter conditions.

**7. Common Good Funds
Maoin Maith Choitchinn**

**a. Cromarty Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the Q4 monitoring statement for the Cromarty Common Good Fund.

**b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, reference was made to the Council’s current land audit to produce a definitive digital record known as a “Terra Tracker” of all its land and property assets, and assurance was sought that liaison took place if it transpired that land was owned by a Common Good Fund.

The Committee **NOTED** the Q4 monitoring statement for the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund and **AGREED** the Senior Community Development Officer would provide details on the Terra Tracker to Members.

**c. Invergordon Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/19/24 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

Assurance was provided to the committee that they would be kept updated with progress on the sale of the Bouchardon Bust, as discussed at the previous meeting and by the full Council.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/20/24 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

During discussion, Mr Loudon sought an update on progress identifying ownership of land at the Blarliath Industrial Estate, and pointed out that he had enquired about this on previous occasions. Mr Louden also sought

clarification on the money that had been set aside for the replacement of the mussel fishing boats, and the level of interest that investment was earning. These details would be provided to Mr Louden outwith the meeting.

The Committee

- i. **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund;
- ii. **AGREED** to provide information to Mr Louden on progress with work to establish ownership of land at the Blarliath Industrial Estate; and
- iii. **AGREED** to provide information to Mr Louden on the funds set aside to provide replacement mussel fishing boats, including the interest being earned.

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

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** details of the Discretionary Budget applications that had been approved.

9. **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Chaolas Chromba**

Mr Calum MacPherson, Chief Executive of Inverness and Cromarty Green Freeport, gave a presentation to the Committee on the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport including the following:

- the Full Business Case had been submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments in June 2024;
- work was being undertaken with ports and harbours in the area, as well as with community councils;
- a workforce development plan was being compiled, in partnership with the Council, Skills Development Scotland, and others, to attract to and retain workforce in the Highlands;
- regular communication was being undertaken with Members and communities;
- myth busting about the green freeport was vital; and
- a supporting document had been circulated to the Committee.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- Members welcomed the opportunities the initiative would bring to the Highlands;
- assurance was sought and provided that connections were being made in relation to the use of ex-Armed Forces personnel. Ms MacCallum offered to provide an introduction to Mr MacPherson in this regard;
- it was hoped Members would be invited to a future Cromarty Harbours meeting and Mr MacPherson offered to investigate this;
- the importance of introducing the career opportunities to pupils in S1 and S2 were emphasised, as was the need to inform parents and carers of the opportunities that were available and the likely subjects and qualifications that might be required. Engagement with schools and with UHI was important, as was the need for funding to provide scholarships. A workforce

- strategy for the region would be helpful. It was also proposed that connections be made with High Life Highland and Youth Highland; and
- Mr MacPherson offered to attend a Black Isle community council chairs 6-monthly meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and the points made during discussion.

**10. Ward Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 13 May 2024, which had been approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held Remotely on 5 August 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Green
Ms B Jarvie
Mr L Fraser
Mr P Oldham

In Attendance:

Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place
Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer, Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr M MacDonald, Technician, Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mrs J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms M Nixon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Mr N Nethercott, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

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

Mr M Green in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 5 – Mr M Green

3. Recess Powers

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Nairnshire Committee.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

- that Mr Alastair Asher had been appointed president of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club, which was a great honour for Alistair, the Nairn Curling Club and the town of Nairn;
- the Committee congratulated Calum Scott, who was the leading golf amateur at the recent Open Championship;
- it was noted that Jesicca Bowie had recently been appointed to role of Community Support Officer and would be a primary contact for local community councils;
- that Viewfield Stables had been emptied and the contents had been collected or donated to charity, and enquiries were underway to explore options to offer the stables as a commercial let;
- the second meeting of the Common Good Fund Engagement Group took place on 1 August 2024 and thanks were given to those who attended;
- good wishes were given to Doug MacLean who was recently appointed as Chair of the Nairn Museum;
- the Committee noted that it was the 200-year anniversary of the RNLI, and they were grateful for the presence of flags around Nairn, thanks were expressed to the local teams for their outstanding work;
- Members noted the Yarn Bombers Group, whose outstanding knitting and crocheting creations across the town of Nairn were commended;
- the upcoming Nairn Book and Arts Festival programme had been released and it was noted that, tickets for events were being sold fast;
- it was raised that the Nairn Local place plan was now out for consultation for public comment;
- that Marine Road had been realigned before the Highland Games take place; and
- that the water leak which had been present on the High Street was currently being repaired.

5. **Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Chaolas Chromba**

Transparency Statement: Mr M Green made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a member of the Council's Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group.

There had been a presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members commented that the Freeport's membership of the Buy Social Scotland pledge and the FSB was encouraging, and this would offer supply chain opportunities for local businesses;
- it was queried if there would be a portal created for local businesses to discover potential opportunities within the Freeport. Clarification was given that the Freeport was cooperating with the FSB and local businesses to support the creation of a mechanism like this. Local businesses would be

encouraged to work together and form small consortiums to bid for contracts as they arose;

- clarification was sought and given as to what impact the General election and the new Government would have on new windfarms being constructed within the Cromarty Firth;
- it was asked if the social impact measuring from the Freeport was Highland wide or focussed more locally and Members requested that further reports be provided on this matter going forward to ensure there was transparency on this matter;
- clarification was sought and provided on how career pathways would be communicated to schools. The Chief Executive of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport explained that many of the roles which would not become available immediately, but communication with schools and colleges would take place;
- it would be beneficial to hold a careers fair to encourage people to see the human face of the Freeport, it was confirmed that small Career fairs had already taken place and it would be pertinent to increase the scope of these to raise awareness of the opportunities which would become available. The Chair would communicate with the Chief Executive of the Green Freeport to progress this; and
- that UHI and colleges should encourage career pathways to the Freeport, as part of a wider network of support. It was suggested that this might help to stem the net loss of young people who left the Highlands every year.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Fire Performance Report - Annual Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Smàlaidh – Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh

There had been circulated Report No NC/10/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- it was noted that encouragingly, the general trend of fires was decreasing;
- clarification was sought and given about how people would request a home fire visit and what factors would impact the decision to carry out a fire safety visit;
- it was queried as to the loss of the female firefighter who had previously been a member of the Nairn crew. The Station Commander for Nairn clarified that this member had been promoted out with the area and had moved elsewhere to pursue further career opportunities within the Service. It was noted that a new female firefighter was currently going through training;
- that availability of the second appliance was down compared to previous years. It was clarified that availability was an ongoing challenge but availability for the first appliance remained very high and Nairn had good coverage provided by the Fire Service;
- credit was given, as the fire service in Nairn was held in high regard, and this would assist in recruitment; and
- clarification was sought and provided about the challenges of retaining staff within the Service.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Report.

**7. Winter Service Plan 2024/25
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No NC/11/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members noted that there had been no reduction in capacity or staffing on previous years and there were aspirations for hiring more staff; and
- it was raised that despite it being discussed at a previous Area Committee, on 8 August 2022, the map of gritting routes on the Council's website had not yet been amended, it was requested and confirmed that when this was amended, Members would be informed.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**8. Nairn Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitchean Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No NC/12/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During Discussion, the following points were raised:

- it was queried when the new accounting system would be operational and whether assurance could be given that this would be in place before the next Area Committee in November. Clarification was given that it was anticipated that for the next meeting, this would be in place;
- that the useable reserves for the Nairn Common Good Fund were impressive, and it was raised that the interest of £17,000 as part of the fund had not been included in the budget, clarity was sought and given as to why this was omitted;
- clarification was sought and given on why staff costs had decreased but the cost of professional services had increased, the Community Development Manager explained that there was an overall reduction in costs from last year and a more accurate representation would be sought before the next Area Committee;
- it was noted that the Committee was monitoring the progress of the Nairn Community and Arts Centre, and this was an ongoing project;
- Members raised that of the anticipated useable reserves, 5% of that figure had potentially been spent and it was reiterated that when Q1 financial figures had been received, this number would be ring-fenced for clarification;
- the Coastal erosion issue for the area was very pressing and would only become more so, Members considered that including this within the budget for the next year would be sensible and would require Government support;
- it was raised that the Government flood money fund should be reinstated, and that the Council should lobby both the UK and Scottish Governments for funding and a long-term strategy for this issue, as this was as a national flood defence problem;
- whether the remaining Coastal defences could be bolstered and repaired to improve their efficiency;
- clarification was sought about how the quotes which had been received for the options brought before the Committee;
- the seriousness of the issue was questioned, and it was suggested that any temporary repairs which were required could use funds from the Common Good Fund; and

- Members raised that money should not be spent on flood protection schemes until the UK and Scottish Governments made funding available.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of the NCGF as shown in the Q4 Revenue Monitoring Statement against Budget for 2023/24;
- ii. **NOTED** the proposal and options regarding coastal erosion at Nairn Links and that works carried out were required to be approved and taken from NCGF reserves; and
- iii. **AGREED** the recommendation outlined within section 6.4 of the report.

9. **Nairn Common Good Fund – Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme** **Maoin Math Coitchean Inbhir Narann – Sgeama Cuireadh Pàigheadh airson Parcadh**

There had been circulated Report No NC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members voiced their disappointment that there was no representation for this report as there were questions which they wished answered. Compared to the previous year the costs had changed drastically and there were concerns about this; and
 - it was decided to defer this item to the next meeting as there were important questions that were unanswered.
- i. The Committee **AGREED** that report be deferred until the next Area Committee meeting on the 4 November 2024; and
 - ii. meantime, to query the Nairn £40 Permit parking Scheme with the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

10. **Proposed Permanent Traffic Order – 40MPH Limit on Extents of A939 & C1175** **Òrdugh Trafaig Maireannach ga Mholadh – Crìoch-astair 40msu air earrannan den A939 agus den C1175**

There had been circulated Report No NC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised;

- that it was sensible proposal given the increase in HGV traffic;
- that the limit be extended to include a longer stretch of road and include a 40MPH extension of the limit to House Hill, it was clarified that this Proposed Permanent Traffic Order would include the referenced stretch of carriageway;
- Members recollected that a section of this road had been suggested for change to a 20MPH limit, and reassurance was given that this would be brought before the Area Roads Team;
- it was raised that the Traffic light sequencing had changed which was causing more delays than previously; and
- Members queried the possibility of improved lighting on the A939 and the dangers of a lack of pavement near the Cemetery.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed change to the permanent traffic order for these roads.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund payment that had been approved since the previous meeting of this Committee: -

Green Hive – Nairn Trike Project - £1,516

**12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 13 May 2024; and the Minutes of the Special Nairnshire Committee held on 24 June 2024 which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Caithness Committee** held **remotely** on 12 August 2024 at 10.00 am

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Jarvie
Mr S Mackie

Ms J McEwan
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie

In attendance:

Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Ms R Robertson, Burial Grounds Project Co-ordinator
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Station Commander, G Cringles, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Inspector S Mezals, Police Scotland
Mr P Faccenda, Focus North Partnership Manager.

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

Business

Preliminaries

In response to a question, the Chair confirmed he would request that an interim report on Highland Council commercial leases in the area be brought to an Area Business Meeting at the earliest opportunity.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gunn and Mr W MacKay.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Item 7: R Bremner, S Mackie, Ms J McEwan (Transparency Statements)
Item 9: Mr R Bremner, Mr S Mackie (Transparency Statements)

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Caithness Committee.

4. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held on 20 May 2024, which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

In relation to Item 9: Ward Discretionary Grants, the Senior Community Development Manager advised she would check whether the grant awarded to Vikki Mackay School of Dance – 1st Annual Easter Festival, had been recorded under the correct Ward.

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/12/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Service be thanked for the informative public engagement session held in Thurso as part of the Strategic Service Review programme and on running fire skills courses in the area;
- the potential for the Service to work with Police Scotland to extend the catchment areas for recruits by providing volunteers with blue lights for their private cars. In response, challenges in relation to insurance and training were highlighted;
- further information was sought and provided on the content of the safer driving presentations delivered at Wick High School; and
- whether provision would be made for specialist equipment to tackle fires at large battery storage plants likely to be built in the area if and when the Wick and Thurso fire stations were replaced. It was confirmed the Strategic Service Review programme was reviewing the location and condition of fire stations and equipment.

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

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/13/24 by the North Area Commander.

The Committee **NOTED** 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 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the proactive approach being taken in relation to road traffic offences in the area be welcomed;
- the significant reduction in missing persons cases in the area and the impact of the closure of Avonlea Children's Home and move to children being placed in different settings;
- in response to a query, an update was provided on the action being taken to boost recruitment in the area. Members indicated they were willing to offer support in this regard;
- confirmation was sought and provided that Members would receive an update on the impact of average speed cameras installed on the Forss straight once live and speed checks would be carried on the alternative Shebster route. The Council was also conducting a speed survey on the alternative route;
- the Police be commended for their attendance at Thurso Community Council and on the level of community liaison achieved;
- concern in relation to the intercom system at Thurso Police Station and any improvements that could be delivered to this interface, including shielding the public from traffic noise and inclement weather. The Inspector confirmed he would follow up on the issues raised outwith the meeting;
- further information was sought and provided on the 'No Knives Better Lives' campaign and level of support Police Scotland was able to provide mainly in schools;
- in terms of the cost of living crisis and incidents of shoplifting, information was sought and provided on the specific items involved and importance of a partnership approach to this issue.

7. Focus North Partnership – Presentation Com-pàirteachas Fòcas a' Chinn a Tuath – Taisbeanadh

Members made the following Transparency Statements in respect of this item, however, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare:

- **Mr R Bremner as Chair of Focus North Advisory Board;**
- **Ms J McEwan as she attended Focus North meetings as a substitute;**
- **Mr S Mackie as a member of the Focus North Advisory Board due to his position as Chair of Dounreay Stakeholders Group**

There was a short presentation by Peter Faccenda, Focus North Partnership Manager.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the exciting opportunities that existed in Caithness and potential for the Partnership to be more streamlined to speed up the delivery of projects. It was reported the Partnership's Advisory and Executive Boards were reflecting on this issue, however the coordination of activities was important particularly in the climate of diminishing resources across many sectors. Progress was being

made in some areas in terms of the pace of delivery through increased direct partner influence and resources being invested in area priorities;

- the volume of opportunities in the Caithness was vast and reference to the ongoing work of the Partnership to ensure the right people, skills, expertise and infrastructure were in place to support investment and economic transformation; and
- in regard to the above, Caithness was uniquely placed as the Partnership regularly had major funders and those who were involved in skills and infrastructure around the table. It was also important that Members put forward proposals and solutions and supported projects where required.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

8. Winter Service Plan 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CC/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in presenting future service plans to Area Committees, it would be helpful for a senior officer from fleet services to be present to allow Members to consider any issues that may impinge on the delivery of the roads operations and provide confidence the required fleet support would be available. The Council Leader advised he would also take this matter forward; and
- in response to a query, confirmation was sought and provided that the Plan and hierarchy of routes was published in the public domain. In addition, the Caithness specific information leaflet on the winter service and Highland wide series of roads factsheets would be shared with Members.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

9. Bereavement Services – Project Updates Seirbheisean Bàis – Cunntas às Ùr mu Phròiseactan

Mr R Bremner and Mr S Mackie made Transparency Statements in respect of this item as a member of the Friends of East Caithness Cemeteries and Amenities Group and Chair of the Fairer Funeral Fees Scotland Campaign Group respectively. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to this item and any personal connection, they did not consider they had an interest to declare

There had been circulated Report No CC/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members thanks be conveyed to the Team for all the good work undertaken in the area and burial services provided;
- the report provided an overview of capacity issues with some burial grounds and those which had longevity; and

- highlighting the challenges that existed in identifying and developing suitable land for some burial grounds in the area and commending the progress being made with the extension at Canisbay and use of local contractors.

Thereafter, concern was expressed that Wick Burial Ground would reach capacity in around three and half years and the challenges that existed in extending the cemetery in terms of the surrounding land. It was confirmed the project team was actively seeking to identify available land for an extension in Wick with a number of potentially available sites being investigated and it was hoped a more defined answer could be provided in the coming months.

Following on from the above, Members indicated it would be helpful for the Committee to be provided with a further update within a period of 12 months regarding progress in identifying a suitable site for the Wick Burial Ground extension. In addition, it was suggested opportunities to provide future briefings to the public and community councils on the forward planning being undertaken be considered.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress of burial ground extensions in the Caithness area;
- ii. **NOTED** the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development;
- iii. **AGREED** the Committee be provided with a further update within a period of 12 months on progress with identifying a suitable site for the Wick Burial Ground extension.

10. **Wick Common Good Fund - Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme Maoin Math Coiteachann Inbhir Ùige - Sgeama Cuireadh gus Pàigheadh airson Parcadh**

There had been circulated Report No CC/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the signage at Riverside and Camps car parks be evaluated to ensure the public and tourists were aware they were available for use and to better advertise invitation to pay. It was confirmed a site visit was to be arranged involving local Members, roads officers and Principal Traffic Officer to discuss a signing plan for the car parks;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the costs associated with external directional signage would not require to be funded by the Common Good Fund;
- the need for works to be undertaken to the Camps car park due to the condition of the barriers and safety concerns at the potential damage to vehicles in some bays particularly in storm conditions. It was confirmed further discussions on potential works would be held outwith the meeting and as part of the site visit referred to above;
- confirmation was sought and provided that any costs accrued in respect of works to the Camps car park would be rechargeable to the Common Good Fund as there was no roads budget allocation for this purpose;
- the need for a forward plan for car parking in Ward 02 and the opportunity to have further discussions with officers on this matter. It was explained that it was

hoped to circulate Members with the draft Thurso Traffic Management Study in August 2024 and to arrange a meeting to seek their views including on car parking; and

- an update was sought and provided on the approach being to parking at the Co-op Car Park, Thurso and that it would be helpful for further discussions to be held with Members on this issue.

The Committee **AGREED** that the £2501.00 cost incurred by the Council's Parking Enforcement Team to operate the invitation to pay parking scheme at the Caithness Common Good sites be charged against the Caithness Common Good Fund.

**11. Wick Common Good Fund - Quarter 4 Monitoring Statement 2024/25
Maoin Math Coiteachann Inbhir Ùige - Aithris Sgrùdaidh Ràith 4 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No CC/17/24 by the Head of Community Support, Contact and Engagement and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

In discussion, information was sought on the management meetings held on an operational basis to boost the income of the Wick Common Good Fund going forward. It was explained that currently there was a Highland wide officer working group with a remit for all common good funds.

Thereafter, concern was expressed at the need to have a local working group to consider opportunities to generate income from Wick Common Good assets such as the Wick Town Hall and to understand the work currently ongoing to promote and market this facility. A local vehicle to build up a Thurso Common Good Fund was also required at the earliest opportunity.

Following further discussion, it was confirmed the Senior Community Development Manager and Community Development Manager would meet with Members to discuss the establishment of a local working group to consider the potential to maximise income for Wick and Thurso Common Good Funds, how this may be managed and resourced going forward, and on the basis a more structured proposal be brought to a future Committee, if required.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Wick Common Good Fund.

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

Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

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

Group Name	Project Name	Award Amount
Community Food Initiatives North East	Fareshare in Highland	£1,690.00

Pentland Firth Yacht Club	Replacement Windows	£1,450.00
Highlife Highland	Active Schools Coaching and Equipment	£1,500.00
Sidh Chailleann Art	Annual art exhibition and set of storytelling events under the theme "Industrial Caithness	£1,000.00
Thurso Youth Club SCIO	Holiday Activities	£1,000.00
Thurso Community Council	Thurso Town Centre initiative 2024	£400.00

Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee is **NOTED** that the following Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Group Name	Project Name	Award Amount
Community Food Initiatives North East	Fareshare in Highland	£2,763.00
Highlife Highland	Youth Session Resources	£999.00

The meeting concluded at 1.30pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Dingwall on 12 August 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr S Kennedy
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive Officer, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operation Manager
Chief Inspector C Smith, Police Scotland

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no Declarations of Interests/Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

4. Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Chaolas Chromba

There had been a presentation by Mr Calum MacPherson, Chief Executive Officer, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.

It was stated that as the full business case progressed, the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Board was pressing on with the following:-

- continuing to work with local workforce development initiatives and education teams so that local supply chains could be in a position to take jobs when they start to flow. A large job fair had been held earlier this year, involving students from Dingwall Academy and other local schools, which promoted vocational apprenticeships; and
- encouraging people to come to the area and invest, not only from Scotland and the rest of the UK but also from Europe, Asia and the United States. It was hoped that this would encourage significant job creation over the next few years and clarification was provided to Members in terms of managing expectations and timing.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- reassurance was sought in terms of housing the workforce. Members were informed that the Board had met with housing associations providers, private house builders and developers. Clarification was provided in terms of responsibilities and it was acknowledged that the Board and Council would work together;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding Local Place Based Plans and the Social Scotland Pledge;
- the recorded webinars were commended as they allowed communities to watch them at a time convenient to them;
- further engagement with local communities and community councils was requested and it was suggested that to involve as many community councils as possible, a joint meeting be held;
- it was said that the Ward of Dingwall and Seaforth might not be ready for the impact of the development and examples were provided, such as, flooding issues in the Dingwall Business Park, the number of beds having reduced at Ross Memorial Hospital and lack of local transport, and it was acknowledged that transport links and childcare support were being considered;
- Mr MacPherson offered assurances that Dingwall would be at the heart of what was happening, in terms of employment and businesses in the area;
- the Board would be meeting with NHS, Fire Brigade, Police and other key services in the next few weeks, in terms of growth;
- assurance was sought, and provided, regarding local contractors accessing the work and it was confirmed that a 'supply chain day' would be arranged for Dingwall soon; and
- Members were encouraged to keep in touch with Mr MacPherson should they feel an issue needs to be addressed.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

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

There had been circulated Report No DSA/10/24 by the North Area Commander.

The Chair welcomed Chief Inspector Smith to the Committee after his recent appointment as North Highland Area Commander. Thereafter the Commander provided an indepth explanation of the report and offered helpful insight to the statistics.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members thanked the Commander for his comprehensive and thorough report;
- Police attendance at community councils was lacking and it was confirmed that although the Police did not have the capacity to attend every meeting, the Commander aimed to bring together community council chairs, and any other appropriate person, to a once-to-twice-yearly meeting. It was suggested that this meeting might include the Green Freepart;
- it was confirmed that reported road traffic collisions were recorded on Police systems and they state whether or not Police attended; and
- the Chair notified the Commander that the Snowman Rally was to be held on Saturday, 19 October 2024 and Dingwall High Street was to be closed off.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

6. Winter Service Plan 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No DSA/11/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members asked the Service to ensure that grit bins were filled prior to the start of the season;
- recent road surfacing works and pot hole repairs were welcomed, however, concern was raised regarding gully emptying and it was asked that this took place as soon as possible to tackle vegetation at the side of the road and culverts. It was said that the Dingwall gully sucker had been in use in the flooding prone areas. It was asked if the main roads could also be looked at; and
- upon request, the Roads Operation Manager provided a list of local contacts and it was asked if the establishment be provided to the Senior Ward Manager.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

7. Dingwall Common Good Fund Monitoring 2024/2025 Sgrùdadh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain 2024/2025

There had been circulated Report No DSA/12/24 by the Heads of Community Support and Engagement and Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Dingwall Common Good Fund.

8. Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since last meeting
Iarrtasan buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàrd Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shìophort air an aontachadh bho choinneamh mu dheireadh

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

- i. Dingwall Fire Brigade Community Group - Gala Week 2024 - £1,250.00
- ii. Conon Bridge Community Council - Refinement of Social Media - £300.00
- iii. Black Isle Farmers' Society - Black Isle Show Sponsorship 2024 - £400.00
- iv. Youth Highland - Summer Activities 2024 (Multi Ward) - £500.00
- v. Dingwall Football Club - Equipment for Season 2024/25 - £961.00

Clarification was sought regarding the Black Isle Farmers' Society as Members thought it had been agreed that sponsorship was no longer offered, rather an application could have been made for incurred costs. Members were reminded that approvals were granted as per the guidelines.

9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 20 May 2024, which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely on 12 August 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Birt
Mrs I Campbell
Mrs E Kraft

In attendance:

Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector Calum Smith, Police Scotland (Item 4)
Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive Officer (ICFGF) (Item 7)

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

Mrs I Campbell in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr P Logue.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee.

**4. Police – Area Performance Report
Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Coileanaidh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/11/24 by the Chief Inspector - Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, on what Police Scotland (PS) referred to as North Highland area;
- it was queried if there was a perceived connection between shoplifting foodstuffs and an increase in the cost of living;
- regarding missing children from care homes, it was confirmed that in many cases children were found to have been out wandering the streets and socialising with friends. However, some vulnerable children had been victims of exploitation with County Lines. In this regard Members were pleased that Police Officers were working alongside Social Work Officers to try and stop missing children cases at source;
- regarding house break-ins and burglary statistics, it was queried if cases could be listed in towns or villages where they had occurred;
- Members expressed thanks to PS for their helpful work on cases and providing guidance when requested by Members;
- regarding driving and speeding offences, it was queried if PS increased patrols for traffic on the North Coast 500 route;
- regarding hate crimes, it was queried if the National Inspection report had been published yet;
- the creation of the Harm Prevention Officer post was welcomed. In this regard it was queried if this post funding was secure or if funding was only available on an annual basis; and
- Members expressed thanks to the Chief Inspector and wished him well in his new role.

The Committee **NOTED** 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 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

5. **Winter Service Plan 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/12/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought regarding the ages of the snow ploughs in the WRSL area, especially the one posted in Lochalsh;
- concern was raised that the nearest vehicle workshop for the Lochalsh area was in Dingwall;
- the need to update local communities of the winter service plan was highlighted;
- an update on staffing was sought, and provided, that vacancies were being prioritised and backfilled; and
- Members expressed thanks to the service for the improvements made to the roads network over the summer period.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

6. **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Budget**

Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since 20 May 2024.

- Coigach Community Development Company Ltd - Growing Achiltibuie - £500.00
- Strathpeffer Community Council - Improvements to Strathpeffer Square - £300.00
- Sheildaig Community Association - Maintenance of Multi Use Games Area - £400.00
- Gairloch Museum - Improve signage for Gairloch Museum and the Achtercairn Archaeology Trail - £590.00
- Gairloch Community Council - Replacement Automatic Emergency Defibrillator - £800.00.

**7. Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update (ICFGF)
Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Chaolas Chromba**

An update was provided by Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive Officer, (ICFGF) on some of the activity relating the Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members expressed thanks for the report and the progress that had been made on the project;
- it was queried if the new UK government had been supportive of the project so far; and
- it was stressed that local communities should be updated on the Green Port project to clarify how it operated, how it was governed and that it would benefit the whole Highland population.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

**8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 20 May 2024 which had been approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The meeting concluded at 11:50am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Wednesday 14 August 2024** at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mr B Boyd (Remote)	Mr R Mackintosh
Mr R Bremer (Remote)	Ms A MacLean
Mr I Brown	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms J McEwan (Remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro
Mr A Graham	Mr M Paterson (Remote)
Mr R Jones	Mr R Stewart (Remote)

Non-Members also present:

Mr D Fraser (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)
Mr P Logue
Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr P Oldham (Remote)

Tenant Representatives in Attendance:

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

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Macleod, Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Mr B Cameron, Interim Head of Housing & Building Maintenance
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property and Facilities Management
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning & Estate Strategy
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

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

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair in the Chair

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee to **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Housing & Property Committee.

4. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair presented Josh McCook, from the Caol Residents Group with a special recognition certificate for all his valuable input into the local community and congratulated him on his award.

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

5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget: Final Outturn 2023/24 Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais agus Neo-thaigheadais gu

There had been circulated Report No HP/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the Council investigate applying any future underspend on loan charges to the reduction of capital debt rather than taking the underspend to reserves and a report be brought back to the Committee;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the advice of the Council's Section 95 Officer on the need to boost the level of HRA reserves;
- the rationale for the transfer of the year end surplus to reserves included the need for resilience and flexibility in terms of future costs pressures and new statutory requirements;
- the approach to the level of historic debt had to be part of a wider strategy and the proposal to apply any future underspend on loan charges to the reduction of capital debt was not a sustainable way forward;
- the approach to the year-end surplus should depend on whether the level of interest generated by this sum being transferred to reserves was higher or lower than the interest paid on servicing the debt;
- outlining the lobbying being undertaken by the Council and Leader with the Scottish and UK Governments to have historical debt written off and the potential to take a similar approach as Shetland Islands Council by tying the debt in with infrastructure works and economic development;
- the previous Leader had lobbied the UK Government without success and any reduction to the loan capital would surely result in a reduction in loan charges;
- in relation to the overspend on the repairs and maintenance budget in 2023/24, differing views in relation to the reasons for and impact of decisions taken in relation to recent rent increases, This included the views and priorities of tenants on rent levels and the national perspective as outlined by the Tenants Representative;

- the recommendation that future HRA Revenue Estimates focus on a longer-term rental strategy covering a number of years be welcomed on the basis it would allow the Service and tenants to plan better for the future;
- it was important the significant analysis underway to ensure that an appropriate rent increase was applied for the next financial year included Member consultation;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the progress being made due to the increase in the repairs and maintenance budget agreed by the Committee for 2024/25;
- in response to a query, information was provided on the current backlog of lower priority repairs, the progress being made in terms of performance and acknowledging the need for a renewed focus on cyclical works;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the role of housing support services and the savings achieved and on how the supervision and management budget would be handled in the current year given the underspend in 2023/24;
- confirmation was sought and provided that information on the current number of vacancies within the Service and the posts involved would be circulated to Members; and
- the Housing Challenge report presented to the Council in June 2024 chartered a strategic path going forward and referenced many of the issues raised by Members.

Thereafter, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair seconded by Ms S Atkin **moved** the recommendations in the report.

As an **amendment**: Mr A Graham seconded by Mrs A Maclean **moved** the recommendations in the report and an additional recommendation that the Council investigate applying any future underspend on loan charges to the reduction of capital debt rather than taking the underspend to reserves and a report be brought back to the Committee.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received **7** votes, the **AMENDMENT** received **6** votes, and there were no abstentions, and the motion was therefore carried, the votes having being cast as follows:

For the motion (7): Ms S Atkin, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr R Jones, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair.

For the amendment (6): Mr A Graham, Ms A Maclean, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr R Stewart.

Decision

The Committee:

- NOTED** the final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account 2023/24; and
- APPROVED** the transfer of the year end surplus of £0.772m to the Housing Revenue Account reserves.

**6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring:
Final Outturn 2023/24
Sgrùdadh Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Toradh
Deireannach 2023/24 (G)**

There had been circulated Report No HP/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an update was sought and provided on progress in bringing the Council's stock up to energy efficiency standards, the significant changes proposed by the Scottish Government in moving to net zero standards, and the implications for the Council's HRA capital programme and tenants;
- in response to a query, Members were advised that it was understood the Scottish Government was maintaining the level of funding for open market house purchases and the Service was cautious about the type of and location of properties purchased;
- concern at the poor standard of maintenance in common areas in housing estates, including new housing developments and that tenants and residents deserved better surroundings and safer footpaths, while acknowledging the reduction in the budget in the current year. It was important to consider this issue more proactively going forward including the available resource, method of weedkilling and no strimming policy. The Chair advised this matter had been discussed at senior level and the Council Leader, Convener and senior Members and was being taken forward with officers;
- in regard to the above, it was recognised staff were working hard within available resources and reference to opportunities for a more collaborative approach to be taken with volunteers in communities;
- further clarity be provided on the protocol in place for the handover of new housing developments to the Council in terms of grounds maintenance;
- it would be helpful for a more detailed breakdown to be provided on the homes delivered as part of the new house build programme 2023/24; and
- in relation to heating and energy efficiency works, the timeline for new external funding opportunities given issues in some older stock in Caithness. It was confirmed officers would provide local Members with an update on plans for the capital programme including opportunities to tie in with external funding opportunities.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2023/24.

**7. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Budget
Final Outturn 2023/24
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Sheirbheisean Rianachd Cuid-seilbh &
Ghoireasan gu**

There had been circulated Report No HP/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in response to a query, an explanation was sought and provided on the new Facilities Management (FM) model and how this would be implemented in schools going forward. It was confirmed an update on the new FM model would be provided to a future Committee;
- an update was sought and provided on the implications for the cleaning service as a result of the savings agreed for the current year, and on the use of robotics and consideration of other ways to modernise and enhance the service;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the impact of letting charges for Council facilities, the challenges in achieving income targets, maintaining facilities to the appropriate standards and supporting communities wishing to use facilities. The additional revenue funding allocated towards the maintenance of facilities was appreciated and further information would be provided in a future report on how this funding was being invested;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the underspend on the cleaning budget was mainly due to staff vacancies, however the Service would continue to advertise and recruit to these posts;
- concern at the overspend on utility costs in respect of Council depots, other offices and HLH properties and the opportunities to encourage behavioural change amongst staff to reduce consumption;
- opportunities to reduce energy costs at Wick Campus be investigated further; and
- further information was sought and provided on the overspend on technical design and projects.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. final position for the 2023/24 financial year; and
- ii. progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery.

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

There had been circulated Report No HP/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- a stakeholder's meeting be held at the earliest opportunity to discuss progress with the new Tain Campus, reference being made to the ongoing representations being received from parent councils by local Members on the project;
- the Service's staff be thanked for their hard work across the vast programme of projects being carried out across Highland;
- an update was sought and provided in relation to progress with the provision of housing for school staff on Rum and noting that other opportunities in rural areas would be considered going forward;
- commending the works undertaken to St Clement's School and Charleston Academy over the holiday period;

- in response to a query, an explanation was provided on the differences in the treatment of the underspend in relation to Dunvegan Primary School and Broadford Primary School; and
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the Gypsy/Traveller site at Longman Park, Inverness and it was confirmed a further update would be provided to Members on the project and funding arrangements in due course.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the capital monitoring position at the end of the 2023/24 financial year and the variances outlined in the report;
- ii. the current position regarding the delivery of the works programmes and the individual projects referred to in the report;
- iii. the various challenges faced in recent years and that would continue into 2024/25 and beyond;
- iv. that the outcome of the options appraisal exercise for the provision of staff housing on Rum would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee on 13 November; and
- v. that the 2024/25 and 2025/26 programmes of work for the School Estate Investment Programme and Property Estate Asset Management budget headings would be reported to the next meeting of this Committee on 13 November 2024 along with a full update on all projects that were underway.

9. Housing Performance Report to 30 June 2024 **Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No HP/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in response to a query, an explanation was provided on the reasons for the increase in re-letting times, mainly due to major refurbishment works required to some longer term voids. Nationally, average re-letting times were increasing and there was increased lobbying being undertaken with the utility companies to reduce delays;
- the reduction in rent arrears was welcomed and reference to the challenges in sustaining performance and the continued process of offering tenants the required level of support;
- investigate the potential for technical arrears to be reported separately from the overall rent arrears figures within the constraints of the information available from the DWP and tenants;
- concerns around homelessness and forced evictions by private landlords and the impact on the Service's staff dealing with such cases and the enhanced training and support provided in this regard;
- a further breakdown on the main reason given for homeless presentations in respect of the age range 26-59yrs be provided to consider pressure points and further support that could be offered to families and children. It was confirmed this matter would be raised with the Scottish Government's statistical team;
- the need for a regular maintenance regime for gutter cleaning and removal of moss from roofs given the impact on the structure of and dampness within properties; and

- information was sought and provided on the rents payable for temporary accommodation compared to social housing rents and timescales for moving people from temporary accommodation to permanent secure tenancies. It was confirmed there had been an overall reduction in the time spent in temporary accommodation and further information would be provided to a future Committee on this matter.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024.

10. Highland Housing Register Allocations Annual Monitoring Report 2023/24

Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Bhliadhnail Riarachaidhean Clàr Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No HP/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Chair advised that work was ongoing to arrange a Housing Summit in October 2024. It was hoped to attract MPs and MSPs, particularly those with housing portfolios, tenant participation officers and others. It was hoped Members would assume an active role and details of the final arrangements would be confirmed in due course.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the phased approach to the implementation of the HHR Allocations Policy. An updated timeline would be provided to Members on the final implementation date;
- there was an ageing population in Highland and the importance of having an age friendly strategy and joined up approach across the Council to deliver more age friendly communities and the mix of housing required;
- the work being undertaken with housing partners to raise awareness of housing options for older people and to encourage individuals to consider their individual housing needs in the longer term;
- the importance of the Policy being rolled out as soon as possible, and opportunities through the private sector and the planning process to facilitate more housing development in response to the level of demand;
- the need for more affordable social housing development in remote and rural areas of Highland experiencing depopulation to support and sustain these communities;
- the problem was not the Allocations Policy but the shortage of housing. It was important to highlight the main factor for the high number of applicants on the HHR Register was due to the high demand for housing in the City of Inverness as a first choice;
- concern at the numbers in the 16-25 age group living with parents/relatives or in temporary accommodation and the impact this may have on their employment opportunities;
- the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport would significantly increase demand for housing and concern at the resultant pressure on the HHR Register going forward. It was confirmed the revised housing needs and assessment would consider the likely impacts on private and social housing;

- in response to a query, it was confirmed a briefing note would be circulated to Members on the decision making process in terms of offering applicants mid-market rent housing;
- further clarity was sought and provided that an annual review of the Register was undertaken to reflect changes in circumstances or where applicants had found their own solution. In addition, applicants were encouraged to inform the Service of any such changes;
- an explanation was sought and provided that one of the challenges to be addressed in the housing needs and demand assessment was to quantify better the level of hidden demand, particularly in rural areas of Highland;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the range of advice and assistance provided to residents at risk of homelessness, including referrals to other agencies; and
- noting that officers would be content to continue discussions with local Members on any opportunities to use housing land to generate income, for example in relation to parking or use of garages.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations which demonstrated that the policy was achieving its objectives and that the Highland Housing Register Partnership continued to provide affordable and secure social housing in Highland communities.

11. Service Performance Monitoring Report 2023/24
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Coileanaidh na Seirbheis 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No HP/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

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

The meeting was closed at 2.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 19 August 2024 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Mr C Ballance

Mr B Boyd

Mr I Brown

Mr M Cameron

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair

Mr A Christie

Ms H Crawford

Mr D Fraser

Mr K Gowans

Mr A Graham

Mr D Gregg

Mrs J Hendry

Ms E Knox

Mrs I MacKenzie

Mr A MacKintosh

Mr R MacKintosh

Ms K MacLean

Mr D Macpherson

Mr D McDonald

Mrs M Reid

Mrs T Robertson

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager

Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Ms R Robertson, Project Coordinator, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer, Roads & Infrastructure

Mr I Ross, Maintenance Technician, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services

Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager

Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Mr M Nixon, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

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

Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive Officer Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

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 was in the Chair

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Sinclair.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:

Declarations of Interest:

Item 12.d – Mr D McDonald

And the following Transparency Statements:

Items 5 and 7 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg
Items 10 and 12 – Mr A Christie
Item 12.d – Mr K Gowans

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the City of Inverness Area Committee.

**4. Military division of The King's Birthday Honours
Roinn Armailteach Urraman Co-là-breith an Rìgh**

The Committee **NOTED** that Retired Special Constable Francis John Sutherland (known as Iain Sutherland) had been honoured with an MBE in recognition of his service to the police force.

Thereafter, the Chair congratulated Megan Keith on being selected to compete in the 10,000m in the Olympics in Paris. He advised that she was an inspiration to all Highland athletes and showed what could be achieved and wished her well in her career and every success in future.

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

Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in their capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and employee of NHS Highland respectively. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No CIA/21/24 dated 7 August 2024 by the Inverness Area Commander.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the City Leader thanked the Police for their work and attendance at the meeting, and referred to the helpful, regular themed meetings that were taking place with the Police, to which all Members of the Committee were welcome, with the next meeting scheduled for 23 September 2024;
- Members reported that some Community Councils had expressed disappointment that police officers no longer attended their meetings as a matter of course and assurance was provided that the Police Scotland committee report would be circulated to City and Area Community Councils. Police attendance at Community Council Forum meetings was highlighted;
- in order to provide reassurance to communities, information was sought and provided on work being undertaken to monitor and prevent the far-right demonstrations that some areas in the rest of the UK had been experiencing;

- information was sought on measures being taken to tackle shoplifting, including monitoring the various reasons for such thefts, such as for the reselling of goods, to fund addiction or poverty. Particular reference was made to rural shoplifting, which increasingly related to tourism, and the concerns of rural shopkeepers who would welcome advice from the Police on CCTV and other preventative measures;
- concern was expressed about fraud and theft against older and vulnerable people, particularly sophisticated online scams which could result in the loss of considerable amounts of money. It was thought these crimes could be under-reported due to people feeling embarrassed at having been tricked, and the relatively low rates of detection. While tackling online fraud was often a national or international initiative, prevention and education could be done at a local level and various options were suggested, including the Police undertaking visits to vulnerable people in their homes, possibly in conjunction with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and NHS Highland, and collaborating with third sector organisations that worked with vulnerable groups to provide information and education. Information was sought and provided on fraud prevention work undertaken with banks at a local level;
- information was sought and provided on initiatives being undertaken to tackle anti-social behaviour and vandalism, including in rural areas, and in conjunction with County Lines initiatives. This could be further discussed outwith the meeting;
- it was noted that the figures for sexual crimes were reducing, although still above the three and five year averages, and the improved trauma-informed approach being taken by Police officers was welcomed;
- attention was drawn to staffing numbers and current vacancies, with particular reference to Police visibility in rural areas, and an assurance was sought that Members would be kept updated on progress with recruitment;
- information was sought and provided on procedures for dealing with missing people, including work with social services and other agencies;
- in response to a query about CCTV systems in Inverness and on the Kessock Bridge, the Senior Community Development Officer explained that the Inverness CCTV system had been recently upgraded. Briefings on issues related to the Kessock Bridge had been provided to Members; and
- serious acts of vandalism against Hi-bike equipment in Inverness was the subject of an ongoing police investigation and would be reported on in due course.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2024 Year 1 attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024; and
- ii. change in format necessitate by a reduction in back-office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

6. Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Chaolas Chromba

There had been a presentation by the Chief Executive Officer of the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport (ICFGF).

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- the ICFGF had already raised the profile of the Highlands across the UK and Europe and it was important to guide the pace of development so it delivered for communities in Highland;

- housing was a major issue in relation to incoming workers associated with the ICFGF and reference to the importance of a partnership approach, investment and industry involvement to deliver good quality accommodation and the right mix of housing in an appropriate timeframe;
- the Council planned to host a housing summit in Inverness in October 2024 and had progressed the Highland Housing Challenge and Highland Investment Plan and therefore action was being taken at the right pace to support the ICFGF with housing and infrastructure;
- discussions be held with the Crofters Commission on the allocation of new crofts across the Highlands which in turn would create opportunities for housing;
- in addition to housing, there was a need for a partnership approach and investment in essential services to support an increase in population in areas such as child and health care;
- the need also for the NHS to forward plan for the expansion of GP practices and other health services;
- highlighting that the partners or relatives of incoming workers would likely bring skill sets in education, child and health care and other areas of demand;
- in response to a query, the ICFGF Chief Executive Officer confirmed he would be willing to attend the Inverness Community Partnership and the Inverness Community Councils Forum;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the interactions with local trade unions to date;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the ICFGF hoped to sign the Armed Forces Covenant in the near future;
- the Buy Social Scotland Pledge was one of the key areas that underpinned and differentiated the ICFGF deal from the rest of the UK;
- the support provided to the Camanachd Association's initiative in respect of female pupils from Highland schools was important on the basis these types of initiatives also helped promote careers and apprenticeship programmes to young people in the area;
- the need to allay community concerns on the knock on effects of the ICFGF by demonstrating the ongoing action being taken in relation to issues of displacement, growing skills and impact on housing, hotel and other types of accommodations in communities;
- the positive message be reinforced that the ICFGF represented a major long term opportunity for the area. Communication was key particularly with communities, and it would also be helpful for regular updates to be provided to the Committee;
- the need to focus on the long term legacy of the ICFGF for the Highlands. It was explained this would include manufacturing businesses creating sustainable employment for the longer term and leading on the transition to renewables;
- an assurance was sought and provided that given the scale of opportunity associated with the ICFGF, all areas would play a part including the Port of Inverness;
- information was sought and provided on the work being undertaken with young people in schools and further/higher education to inform them of potential career choices and prospects available through the ICFGF and incentives to retain and attract them to the area. This included plans for a large scale apprenticeship scheme of national significance;
- it was hoped the grid connection for the Port of Cromarty Firth was prioritised in SSEN's planning. It was confirmed this issue and the charging regime was actively being considered;

- further information was sought and provided in response to the concerns around the impact of workers camps on communities and the road network; and
- further clarity was sought on the transportation required for workers moving around the area. It was explained opportunities were being considered for active and marine travel, and a centralised transport point and for these to be environmentally effective and from which local people could also benefit.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**7. 2024/25 Annual Report on Inverness Business Improvement District
Aithisg Bhliadhnaid 2024/25 mu Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland and Non-executive Director of Inverness Business Improvement District. Mr D Gregg made a Transparency Statement in this item as an employee of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/22/24 dated 2 August 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place. The report provided a summary of the activities and proposed activities of the Inverness BID Ltd, operating as Inverness City Centre Business Improvement District (BID) for the period 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2025.

Following an introduction to the report by the Senior Community Development Manager for the City of Inverness & South, there was discussion on the growth of the gull population and the problems associated with this. Due to the impact of Avian flu on gull numbers, changes had been made to licensing requirements by NatureScot which meant it would be more challenging to obtain licences to control gulls. This would result in more issues with nuisance/aggressive gulls. It was requested that NatureScot be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation on their policies and procedures on this matter, which was at odds with what the Council wanted to do.

The Inverness Common Good Fund had funded the gull management project, with a contribution from Inverness BID, but had not been able to proceed with it due to the change in licence requirements by NatureScot in respect of all but a very few locations. Therefore, any unused funding from this project would be available for reallocation. It was suggested that this funding be used to rectify some of the problems left behind by gulls, such as litter with gulls accessing bins. It was queried if the design of bins could be changed to prevent this. Practical ways of utilising these funds in addressing the gull management problem would be looked into and reported to the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub Committee.

Further, the work of the Inverness Business Improvement District was commended in improving the area as a great place to live, work, visit and shop.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the work detailed in the report;
- NOTED** the ongoing development of partnership working in the key areas identified;
- NOTED** that a Members Briefing would be arranged to provide for further discussion with BID Board representatives;

- iv. **AGREED** that NatureScot be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation on their policies and procedures on gull management; and
- v. **NOTED** that a report would be submitted to the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee on the feasibility of funds being used to implement gull management measures.

8. Bereavement Services update Cunntas às ùr mu sheirbheisean bàis

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/23/24 dated 5 August 2025 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update to Members on the work being undertaken on burial ground capacity and new burial grounds in the Inverness area.

Following a summary of the report by the Lead Officer, the new extensions and new burial ground developments were welcomed. Amenity Services were aware of the additional work with grass cutting at these sites. It was requested that there should be an annual report on Bereavement Services and this be expanded to include other areas such as cremators maintenance, funeral poverty and funeral payments, so a holistic view of bereavement services was provided in order to see where improvements could be made.

Continuing, the Council needed to be in a position where it could ensure it would maintain its cemeteries to a high standard. The extension to Kilvean cemetery would provide 10 plus years of additional capacity, but the process to identify land for another large cemetery for the City should begin in the near future. Also, the cemetery at Old Petty (Castle Stuart) had fallen into disrepair and while some work had been undertaken at the site there would be further safety checks. Further, the Council had a duty to inspect all memorials every five years and inspections were underway. The need to communicate to Members when the cremators at the Crematorium were out of action was highlighted.

It was highlighted that the Inverness Burial Grounds Commutation Fund provided extra resources for the maintenance of burial grounds. It was intended that this fund would finance a programme of capital burial ground projects in the near future.

In relation to further queries from Members, it was advised that once an access road had been completed work would commence on Dores cemetery; there had been discussion on woodland/natural burials but no firm outcomes as yet; the suggestion of old cemeteries having areas for recreational use had been done in other areas and could be considered here; community involvement in maintaining smaller cemeteries had been done successfully in several areas and the Council was willing to assist community groups wishing to do this.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress of burial ground extensions in the Inverness area;
- ii. **NOTED** the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development; and
- iii. **AGREED** an annual report on Bereavement Services, to include wider aspects of services provided such as cremations and funeral poverty, be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

**9. Petition for Speed limit change on A833
Athchuinge airson casg astair atharrachadh air A833**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/24/24 dated 31 July 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. The report provided details of a petition requesting that the Highland Council re-classify the section of the A833 road stretching south from Belladrum to the Convinth junction from national speed limit to 40mph.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the petition and the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to grant approval for officials to carry out a review and analysis of the relevant section of road with a view to considering implementation of an appropriate speed limit over an appropriate length of the A833. All in accordance with relevant criteria for setting local speed limits with any proposed implementation of speed limits following relevant procedure in terms of consultation advertising etc.

**10. Winter Service Plan for 2024/25
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2024/25**

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/25/24 dated 22 July 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided details of the 2024/25 Winter Service Plan for City of Inverness and Area.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- assurance was provided that the road to Ness Castle Primary School was a primary route, and that the inclusion of Broom Drive and Balnakyle Road, Lochardil would be investigated for inclusion as primary routes as they were now bus routes. Attention was drawn to two footpaths that provided essential links to shops and community facilities (from Harris Road to the Hilton shopping centre, and from Drakies to the Inshes Retail Park) and it was asked whether these could be included in the winter maintenance programme as a priority. Members could email details of any other roads or footpaths they felt required reclassification. Adopted Council footpaths would be included;
- several Members expressed concern about the poor state of many gullies, which required regular clearing to avoid build-up of debris which could cause flooding, and icy conditions during cold weather. It was explained that the current gully clearing machine required replacement, however the preferred larger capacity machine had an 18-month waiting list to order, whereas the purchase of two smaller capacity machines was possible much sooner. However, there was insufficient budget at present to purchase two smaller machines. Members asked that a report on this be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;
- concern was expressed at the number of complaints received about insufficient levels of grass-cutting and related maintenance and, in response to a call for a report on this prior to the start of the 2025 growing season, it was suggested that this might be best incorporated into the capital road resurfacing report;

- Mr D Gregg asked for information on responsibility for the winter maintenance of the bus gate at Raigmore Hospital, and this would be provided outwith the meeting;
- the importance of Council services communicating and co-operating with one another on the issues discussed was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to the pavement surface near Ness Bridge, and other similar sections of pavement which had been constructed with a material that was prone to be more slippery than usual during cold weather. Assurance was provided that this was being investigated;
- it was confirmed that the Council collaborated with Bear Scotland and other relevant agencies on winter maintenance;
- information was sought and provided on responsibility for ensuring trees etc did not encroach on the public pavement or obscure road signs etc, with particular reference to a piece of land near the Leonardo Hotel which belonged to the hotel but which the Council was responsible for keeping vegetation clear of the Council's signage; and
- a Q&A page on the Council's website containing information for Members on the issues discussed would be helpful.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25 and **NOTED** that there would be further investigation to determine the inclusion of Balnakyle Road and Broom Drive as priority one routes, the bus gate at Raigmore Hospital and the strategic footpaths referred to at the meeting; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee on:
 - a. gully clearing issues, including equipment; and
 - b. grass cutting schedule and consideration be given to including summer maintenance issues into the Capital Resurfacing Programme report for 2025-26.

11. Allocation Process for Area Share of Invitation to Pay Scheme Pròiseas Riarachaidh airson Co-roinn Sgìreil den Sgeama Cuireadh airson Pàigheadh

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/26/24 dated 22 July 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the low income from parking at Whin Park was queried but the reason was not known.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the options set out for distribution in paragraph 6.1 of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed process for the area allocation of invitation to pay income, with income being given for distribution to the ward within which the car park was located with decisions being taken by the appropriate Community Development Manager in consultation with relevant Ward Members;
- iii. **NOTED** that the process would be reviewed after the first year of implementation; and
- iv. **NOTED** that in line with the Scheme of Delegation, the delegated powers for the authorisation of spend up to £10,000 would be assigned to the Senior Community Development Manager and over £10,000 would be subject to Committee approval.

**12. 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 Non-executive Director of Inverness Business Improvement District. 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 Sub-Committee Annual Report 2023/24
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis
2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/27/24 dated 5 August 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the City Leader thanked the Chair and Members of the Sub-Committee for their work;
- the Chair of the Sub-Committee summarised the benefits of Inverness's sizeable common good fund, which was used for the benefit of the residents of the former burgh but provided benefits to the wider Inverness area as a result. He thanked the Members of the Sub-Committee and officers for their work;
- in response to a proposal to fill the vacancy on the Sub-Committee, it was pointed out that this had not been on the agenda, and that it would be preferable to fill this after the forthcoming by-election, at the next meeting of the Committee;
- in relation to the increasing costs of providing civic hospitality, attention was drawn to procurement measures and processes that were being put in place to ensure best value was achieved;
- in response to a query about the work of the town twinning committee, a brief summary of activities was provided, and a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- it was confirmed that citizenship ceremonies were not being held at the Town House.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the work of the ICGFSC as described within the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to the replacement of the reference to Director of Development and Infrastructure with Assistant Chief Executive – Place in “clause h” and to the inclusion of new “clause j” within the Powers delegated to the ICGFSC shown in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the vacancy on the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee would be filled at the next meeting of the Committee, after the by-election.

**b) Financial Monitoring – 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/28/24 dated 2 August 2024 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the near final monitoring report (Appendix 1 of the report) for the Inverness Common Good Fund for the year ended 31 March 2024.

**c) Inverness Common Good Fund – Town House Car Park
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Pàirc Chàraichean Taigh a’ Bhaile**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/29/24 dated 10 July 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED** that £4,085.00 costs incurred by the Council’s Parking Services Team to operate the Town House Car Park as a Common Good site was charged against the Inverness City Common Good Fund.

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

Mr D McDonald declared an interest in this item as President of Kings Golf Club and left the Chamber for the determination of this item.

Mr K Gowans and made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as an employee of Inverness College UHI. 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/30/24 dated 2 August 2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the following grant applications for funding;
 - a. UHI Inverness - £5,743
 - b. Hilton Family Support - £14,100
 - c. New Start Highland - £30,550
 - d. Volocity Café & Bicycle Workshop - £7,261
 - e. Apex Highland - £14,581
- ii. **NOTED** that no further applications would be considered during the financial year 2024/25 under the Poverty and Inequality or Other Grants Budgets unless further funding was allocated to the relevant budgets; and
- iii. **AGREED** the Grants budget be closed to further applications for the remainder of financial year 2024/25.

**13. Inverness Local Holidays 2025/26
Saor-làithean Ionadail Inbhir Nis 2025/26**

The Committee **AGREED** the following dates as Local Holidays for the City of Inverness for years 2025 and 2026:

2025

Wednesday 1 January 2025 (New Year’s Day)
Thursday 2 January 2025 (2nd January Holiday)
Monday 3 February 2025

Monday 3 March 2025
Monday 21 April 2025 (Easter Monday)
Monday 5 May 2025 (May Day Holiday)
Monday 7 July 2025
Monday 6 October 2025
Monday 3 November 2025
Thursday 25 December 2025 (Christmas Day)
Friday 26 December 2025 (Boxing Day)

2026

Thursday 1 January 2026 (New Year's Day)
Friday 2 January 2026 (2nd January Holiday)
Monday 2 February 2026
Monday 2 March 2026
Monday 6 April 2026 (Easter Monday)
Monday 4 May 2026 (May Day Holiday)
Monday 6 July 2026
Monday 5 October 2026
Monday 2 November 2026
Friday 25 December 2026 (Christmas Day)
Monday 28 December 2026 (Boxing Day)

14. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes were:-

- i. **NOTED** - City of Inverness Area Committee held on 27 May 2024;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 1 August 2024; and
- iii. **APPROVED** - Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 28 June 2024.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 22 August 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr D Macpherson
Mr I Brown	Mr H Morrison (remote)
Mr M Cameron	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson
Mr M Green	Mrs M Ross
Mr R Jones	Mr R Stewart
Mr P Logue	Ms M Smith
Mr W MacKay (remote)	Ms K Willis

Non-Members also present:

Mrs T Collier (remote)	Mr D McDonald
Mr J Grafton	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr B Lobban (remote)	Mr C Munro (remote)
Mr R MacKintosh	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr T MacLennan (remote)	Mr M Reiss

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive - Place
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager, Estates Management
 Ms H Cameron, Housing Development Manager
 Mr A McCann, Economy & Regeneration Manager
 Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Manager
 Mr M Bailey, Programme Manager (City Region Deal)
 Mr N Young, Active Travel Manager
 Mr D Chisholm, Tourism and Inward Investment Team Leader
 Mr T Stott, Principal Planner
 Ms E MacIver, Principal Engineer
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance
 Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr L Princ, Sustainable Aviation Manager (Item 5)
 Ms R Wallace, Sustainable Aviation Project Officer (Item 5)

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 9 – Ms M Smith

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

Item 12 – Mr H Morrison

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

**4. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

Naver Bridge - Naver Bridge was due to start construction in August and the contract had been awarded to Wills Bros Civil Engineering Ltd for construction of replacement bridge upstream of the existing bridge.

Active Travel Schemes:- Active Travel Schemes had been completed in Riverside Way and Torvean Mobility Hub.

Highland Council Staff Recognition Awards:- The Highland Council Staff Recognition had been awarded to In-House Bus Operation Team for Service Innovation & Improvement award, Roads Response Team for Best Team award and the Storr Project Team with the Convener's award.

**5. Presentation - Sustainable Aviation Test Environment (SATE) Findings
Taisbeanadh – Toraidhean Deuchainn Àrainneachd Itealanachd
Sheasmhach**

Mr L Princ, Sustainable Aviation Manager and Ms R Wallace, Sustainable Aviation Project Officer from HITRANS gave a presentation on the SATE project, the technology capabilities, and identified use cases. Insights, reports and data

had helped build a picture of where technology from SATE could be best placed in the near future to improve transportation and connectivity in the region. This was an opportunity to raise awareness of the developments and presented the findings for feedback on any impact further progression or implementation of sustainable aviation would have on the Highlands.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- further information was sought on the suggested fuel types and detail on how they would meet zero emission targets;
- Members requested the presentation be circulated to them;
- it was queried what engagement has been sought from local communities as there was a potential risk they might not welcome the new innovations; and
- thanks were expressed to the Hi-Trans representatives for their informative presentation.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** to circulate the Presentation on the SATE Project to Members.

6. Revenue Budget Monitoring Near Final Outturn 2023/24 Report and Service Performance Reporting for Financial Year 2023/24
Aithisg Toradh Faisg air Deireannach Sgrùdadh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach 2023/24 agus Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson na Bliadhna Ionmhasail 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/33/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- major concern was raised that the Corran Ferry was responsible for the majority of the overspend (£3.34m) and it was therefore queried if any progress had been made with engaging the Scottish Government for any recovery of the income. In addition, it was also queried if there was a contingency plan in place should the Ferry be out of commission again before the replacement vessel arrived. It was felt to be a failure of the Council that further contingencies had not been put in place when the original vessel (the Maid of Glencoe) went out of commission and the substitute vessel had been mobilised;
- it was welcomed that days lost through sickness at work had decreased. In this regard, it was queried if any cross-service work had been carried out to share information on how to reduce days lost through sickness across the Council;
- concern was raised regarding poor Freedom of Information (FOI) performance despite it being a statutory function. In this regard it was queried what additional resource had been put in place to access, collate and resolve more complex information requests. In addition, Members confirmed they should not have to submit any FOI to Highland Council as any information required for them to make informed decisions should be supplied;

- reduced time to determine major planning applications was welcomed. In this regard it was queried if the improved performance would be expected to continue due to recruitment progress and reduced staff caseloads;
- regarding Winter Maintenance forecast and overspend, it was queried if spend was anticipated to reduce due to climate change weather conditions or if the overspend should increase as it was often overspent;
- it was queried if there had been any impact from short-term lets within the planning figures;
- it was requested that reports utilise the British format for numbers when reporting monetary figures for clarity;
- Members requested quarter one budget reports be sent to them as soon as they were available in the normal committee report format and sought a guarantee that quarter two budget report be available for the 14 November 2024 Economy & Infrastructure Committee;
- it was queried if a new Roads gulley sucker machine had been ordered, as some gulleys had not been emptied for approx. 4 years in the Inverness area. In this regard concern was raised that substantial costs might be incurred if there were flash floods;
- regarding section 8.2 of the report, Service performance information from the Service plan, it was queried what the annual update in June for Roads Network – B, C, and U class would be concerning as it was unclear;
- it was queried when the annual version of the Scottish Road Condition Maintenance Survey Report would be published and made available; and
- it was requested that Caithness roads white-lining works be prioritised due to the Health & Safety implications for drivers.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

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

and **AGREED**:-

- iii. that the Revenue Budget Monitoring 2024/25 quarter one be circulated to Members when available and that quarter two information be provided to the next Economy & Infrastructure Committee on the 14 November 2024.

7. Capital Monitoring – Quarter 4 2023/24 Sgrùdadh Calpa – Ràith 4 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/34/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members requested that the format of the Capital Monitoring report be reviewed to allow for improved detailed scrutiny and a better overview of financial year expenditure.

The Committee **NOTED** the near final out-turn for 2023/24 and **AGREED** to review the format of the Capital Monitoring reports to enable better scrutiny.

**8. UK Shared Prosperity Fund - Delivery Plan Progress Update
Maoin Soirbheachas Co-roinnte na RA – Cunntas air Adhartas a’ Phlana
Lìbhrigidh**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/35/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- there was support for the Chair to seek an extension of the May 2025 deadline from the UK Government or, failing this, a risk assessment be considered by the Committee; and
- it was disappointing the e-bikes that had been introduced, after significant public investment, had been vandalised. To go part way to prevent this from reoccurring again the front baskets had been removed but this hindered those potential users with shopping. There was merit in discussing with other local authorities which operating similar schemes, to ascertain how they avoided such damage.

The Committee **NOTED** the UKSPF Delivery Plan progress update.

At this juncture, appreciation was expressed to Mr A McCann, Economy & Regeneration Manager, on his imminent retirement, and special recognition was made across the Chamber of his dedication, hard work and his substantial commitment with communities over many years.

**9. Fort William Business Improvement District (BID)
Sgìre Leasachadh Gnìomhachais a’ Ghearasdain**

Declaration of Interest – Ms M Smith made a Declaration of Interest as an owner of a business in Fort William and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/36/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Chair clarified two errors in the report:-

In relation to paragraph 5.1 of the report, he explained that, for a BID to be successful, there needed to be a minimum of 25% turnout of eligible businesses in the area both by number and aggregate rateable value. And, of those voting, there needed to be a majority of 50% or more in favour, both by number and by combined rateable value of the properties voting.

Also, in relation to paragraph 5.2, it was clarified that the Council was an eligible levy payer as there were several Council owned properties in the proposed Fort William BID area which would be liable for the levy.

These errors did not affect the assessment of the Fort William BID, the merits of which were to be discussed at the Lochaber Committee on 27 August 2024.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the assessment made in Appendix 2 of the report relative to the Fort William BID Proposal; and
- ii. **AGREED** not to exercise the Council's right of veto.

10. Delivery Programme for Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 and wider Highland
Prògram Lìbhrigidh airson Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Linne Mhoireibh 2 agus airson na Gàidhealtachd san Fharsaingeachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/37/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** and adopt the Local Development Plan Delivery Programme at Appendix 1 of the report noting that the Inner Moray Firth element of it will fulfil the Council's duty to publish an Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 delivery programme by 27 September 2024;
- ii. **AGREED** to consult more widely on the Highland Delivery Programme in line with the Council's Developer Contributions Protocol; and
- iii. **NOTED** the transition towards the new Highland Delivery Programme being approved by Full Council and becoming the principal corporate and cross agency tool for coordinating investment in Highland.

11. Highland Council Airfields
Raointean-adhair Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/38/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- if airfields were to be leased, given the presentation earlier in the meeting in relation to the future potential use of drones, it was questioned if this would allow such proposals to progress;
- it was hoped the long-term lease of the Plockton Airfield would still result in it being used for aviation purposes and not used for anything else;
- the Council's retention of Ashaig airfield was important to develop the air service there and ensuring it was kept in good condition for air ambulances;
- discussions about community land transfers was important; and
- it was questioned how developing the aviation capacity aligned with the Council's Net Zero and Sustainable Tourism strategy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress made towards a lease on Dornoch Airfield and works remaining to be undertaken to enable this;
- ii. **NOTED** the resolution of an historic title issue at Plockton Airfield, enabling progress to be made towards a long-term lease or sale of the site;
- iii. **AGREED** that the Council should progress discussions with interested parties at Plockton Airfield and report back to Members with a recommended approach to long-term lease or sale of the site; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Council should continue to operate Ashaig airfield in a manner which meets all necessary legal obligations and ensures the airfield is maintained to a level which will support development of potential future aeronautical activities.

12. Road Policies Update Cunntasan às Ùr mu Phoileasaidh Rathaid

Transparency Statement: Mr H Morrison made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a close family member was an employee of the roads department However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/39/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Variable and Vehicle Activated Signs Policy as contained in Appendix 2;
- ii. **APPROVED** the introduction of a one-off fee of £300 for variable and vehicle activated signs that are externally funded, to be paid upfront, before installation;
- iii. **NOTED** that after the policy is approved, the “Variable and Vehicle Activated Signs Manual” will be finalised and distributed accordingly;
- iv. **APPROVED** the Grit Bin Policy as contained in Appendix 3 of the report;
- v. **APPROVED** the updated Cattle and Deer Grid Policy as contained in Appendix 5 of the report ;
- vi. **APPROVED** the proposed change to the cattle and deer grids charge to 10% of the construction cost with £2,500 as a minimum;
- vii. **APPROVED** the updated Coast Protection Policy as contained in Appendix 7 of the report; and
- viii. **APPROVED** the updated Roadside Hazards Policy as contained in Appendix 9 of the report.

13. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited Annual Accounts 2022/23 Cunntasan Bliadhna Earranta Coimhearsnachd Tuathanas-gaoithe na Beinne Tarsainn 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/40/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- community benefit from windfarms in Highland was now £5k per MW and yet Beinn Tharsuinn windfarm donated £2k per MW, for historical reasons. As a result of the Council's Social Value Charter renewable energy firms had been contacted identifying expectations in regard to voluntary contributions and it was suggested that Beinn Tharsuinn's developer should review their contribution;
- it had previously been suggested that community benefit from windfarms be increased to £12.5k, divided between communities and the Council. Other countries sought even higher amounts and the benefit to Local Authorities enabled infrastructure improvements;
- the relatively low rate of interest received was questioned given the level of funds in the account and it was suggested there might be a more prudent way of managing that fund; and
- the Assistant Chief Executive – Place was asked to contact the developer of the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm seeking an increase of the community benefit paid per MW and that community councils, where funding was eligible, be copied in.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the activities of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited;
- AGREED** to accept, on behalf of Highland Council, the Financial Statement of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited for year ending 31 March 2023; and
- AGREED** that the Assistant Chief Executive – Place write to Scottish Power, the developer of the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm, seeking an increase of the community benefit paid per MW.

14. Membership of the Harbours Management Board Ballrachd Bòrd Stiùiridh nan Calachan

- * The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Highland Council to appoint Ms M Hutchison to the Harbours Management Board.

15. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- South PAC – 19 March 2024;
- North PAC – 16 April 2024;
- South PAC – 30 April 2024;
- North PAC – 4 June 2024;

and also **APPROVED**:-

- Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group held on 21 May 2024;

- vi. Harbours Management Board held on 31 May 2024; and
- vii. City Region Deal Monitoring Group held on 15 August 2024.

16. Exclusion of the Public
Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

17. Housing Development Initiatives
Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/41/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

18. Property Transactions Monitoring Report
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/42/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

19. Land and Property
Fearann agus Seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/43/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 12.30 pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in **Kingussie Courthouse /Remotely** on 26 August 2024 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Ms M Cockburn

Mr R Jones
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager
Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer
Ms A Tanner, City Heritage Project Officer
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Manager
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Inspector C Johnstone, Police Scotland
Ms A MacIver, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Mr J Turner, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

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

Business

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following transparency statement:-

Item 10 - Mr B Lobban

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/011/24 by the Area Commander (South Highland Area Command), Police Scotland.

Inspector C Johnstone, Police Scotland provided a summary of the key points of the report and an additional summary of factors that led to the A9 being closed.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- it was emphasised that speeding in villages was still a serious problem;
- in response to a suggestion that placing marked speed control vans close to junctions could be useful in preventing accidents, Inspector Johnstone undertook to raise this with the Camera Safety Unit;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the directives on how speeding was dealt with came from the Roads Policing Unit;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the post of Harm Prevention Officer was secure for at least three more years;
- in response to a question; it was confirmed that there had been 16 missing children in the last year and there were currently no outstanding missing children;
- information was sought and provided on how drug offenses were dealt with in the Badenoch and Strathspey area, and the Reducing Acts of Terrorism training was being used in schools and communities; and
- disappointment was expressed that Community Liaison Officers had been unable to attend Community Council meetings or local events however, it was understood that this was due to resourcing issues.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. 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 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024; and
- ii. the change in format necessitated by a reduction in back-office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

In terms of Standing Order 9 it was agreed that item 10 be considered at this stage.

10. **Highlands and Islands Enterprise - Community Development Update** **Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean – Cunntas air Leasachadh** **Coimhearsnachd**

Transparency Statement – Mr B Lobban as a director of Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd.

There was a presentation from Highlands and Islands Enterprise. Highlighting the work being done with partners around Community Development.

- it was important to continue to highlight the work done by the Newton Rooms;

- it was essential that the Council worked with HIE and other partners to improve public transport links in Badenoch and Strathspey; and
- information was sought and provided on the help available for businesses who had stopped trading with or importing from Europe due to new regulations; the impact that Scottish Government funding cuts would have on HIE's ability to support projects in Badenoch and Strathspey; the transition to net zero; the Cairngorm funicular railway; and whether work was being done to help with apprenticeships in the construction industry and attracting more trades people to the Badenoch and Strathspey area.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and that close liaison would take place between HIE, the Council and other relevant agencies in respect of promoting economic development activities with a focus on advancing Public Transport provision in particular.

**5. Education Update - Grantown Grammar
Cunntas Foghlaim – Sgoil-ghràmaid Bhaile nan Grandach**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/012/24 by the Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought and provided on the anticipated effects of falling school roles, the numbers of placing requests in Badenoch and Strathspey and, preparation for vaccination programmes in schools; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that early years education numbers were being tackled to help with forward planning and that these would be provided to Members.

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

**6. Education Update - Kingussie High School
Cunntas Foghlaim – Àrd-Sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/013/24 by the Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning.

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

**7. Winter Service Plan 2024/25
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/014/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the quick action in introducing emergency measures to close the Glentruim Road to all but local residents following the closure of the A86;
- the importance of communications around gritting routes was emphasised;

- information was sought and provided in the refilling of grit bins;
- the Roads Operations team was commended for the excellent work it did during the winter months;
- on the point being raised regarding winter gritting, it was clarified that there were currently enough contactors on the standby list but more would always be welcome; and
- it was queried whether information on the Community Self Help scheme had been given to Community Councils.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**8. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Application
Measadh air Iarrtas airson Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There is circulated Report No BSAC/015/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there had been several applications including automatic door opening mechanisms for buildings such as village halls as they were a way to make older buildings more accessible;
- it was suggested that the funding could be approved on the condition that the applicant secured available match funding;
- a suggestion was made that only the £5,700 funding for legal services be approved as this seemed to be the most essential part of the application;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that if the project failed the assents would not sit with the Council;
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that if the applicant was unable to raise match funding within the deadline given, other applications could be invited for the remaining funds; and
- in response to a question it was confirmed that there was £9,169 capital funding available from the Place Based Investment Fund and £6,948 revenue funding available from the UK shared prosperity fund.

The Committee **AGREED** to grant £5,700 revenue funding for legal expenses, and the available £9,169 capital funding on the condition that, in respect of the capital funding, match funding was secured by the applicant within 28 days.

**9. Glenmore Waiting and Loading Restrictions Consideration of Objections
Beachdachadh air Gearanan mu Bhacaidhean Feitheimh is Luchdachaidh a' Ghlinne Mhòir**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/016/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the restrictions recommended in the report were the most positive solution available initially and could be revisited in the future;

- the Parking Management team was commended for their work on this project and in responding to public objections;
- it was queried whether the new parking regulations could allow the black and white barrier posts to be removed;
- information was sought and provided on the functionality of the parking meters; and
- the creation of a new post for a dedicated parking officer for Badenoch and Strathspey was welcomed.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Order as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report having it been altered and reduced in severity from the original proposals issued for Public Consultation and following feedback from consultees.

11. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. that no Ward Discretionary Fund payments had been made since 3 June 2024; and
- ii. the available Ward Discretionary Fund balance was £14,600.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated for noting Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 3 June 2024 which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024 which were **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 26 August, 2024 at 9.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager (Skye)
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Mr M Bailey, CRD/UKSPF Programme Manager, Economy & Regeneration
Ms A Smith, Project Manager, Strategic Improvement
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer - Corporate

Also in attendance:

Ms S Compton-Bishop, Board Chair, NHS Highland
Ms L Bussell, Board Nurse Director, NHS Highland
Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, SFRS
Mr S Fraser, Station Commander, SFRS
Mr S Cousins, Communications Director, SkyeConnect
Mr G Curley, Director, SkyeConnect
Ms Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

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

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Items 7 & 8 – Mr C Munro (Transparency Statement)
Items 9,10 & 12 – Mr D Millar (Transparency Statement)

3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee noted that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

4. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, minutes of meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 3 June, 2024 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 27 June, 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

5. **Presentation on NHS Highland Response to the recommendations in the Independent External Review of Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross Out of Hours Service, Sir Lewis Ritchie 2018** **Taisbeanadh air Freagairt NHS na Gàidhealtachd do na molaidhean san Ath-sgrùdadh Neo-eisimeileach on Taobh A-muigh mu Sheirbheis Taobh A-muigh Uairean Àbhaisteach an Eilein Sgitheanaich, Loch Aillse agus Rois an Iar-Dheas, Sir Lewis Ritchie 2018**

Sarah Compton-Bishop, Board Chair and Louise Bussell, Board Nurse Director, NHS Highland were in attendance to give a presentation on NHS Highland's response to the recommendations in the Sir Lewis Ritchie report on out of hours service for Skye, Lochalsh and South West Ross. Delivering against the recommendations had been very challenging given the Covid pandemic and complex nature of service provision in rural and Island communities. However, significant progress had been made thanks to staff and continued input to this process from local communities and community representatives. An update on progress was provided and it was highlighted that good progress had been made on the multi agency recommendations contained in Sir Lewis's report and it was intended to complete outstanding actions within 2024, such as in the areas of urgent care centre, care bed provision, continued community and staff engagement, interagency workforce planning and transport. In particular, it was advised that there was no intention to close Portree Hospital any time in the near future. Thereafter, attention would be turned to long term plans for the area and the representatives indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to return to the Committee to present these.

In discussion, it was highlighted that Sir Lewis Ritchie in his report had found that the out of hours service had not been sufficiently sustainable or equitable. North Skye had the majority of the population on the Island and a growing number of tourists visiting the area. An out of hours service was essential for the area that was sustainable and resilient and progress that had been made with this was encouraging. The learning from this could be applied to other rural and Island communities. The need for continued support of staff was necessary given there was so much focus in the community concerning Portree Hospital. Also, clear communication was required as to what the public could expect from an urgent care/out of hours service and the review of care bed provision was crucial and must meet the needs of the North Skye community.

Further, there was some anxiety in the community over the 111 urgent support provision given delays in the service. This needed to be fit for purpose to deliver the health care needs in Skye and it was confirmed that there was engagement with NHS24 on this issue. There was also an allegation that the medical centre in Portree were not willing to cater for urgent care and people were being directed to Portree hospital or Broadford hospital for emergencies. It was advised that there was a need for clear communication in this respect. Also, there was work ongoing to build up GP capacity in the area.

In terms of freeing beds in the hospital by providing social care for people at home, there was work ongoing through a recruitment group to achieve this, but it was challenging to recruit people to undertake this role. While there was a need for a Highland transport group, there was still a need for a local transport group with local community engagement.

It was highlighted that the sign for Portree Hospital had been removed and it was confirmed that action was being taken to replace it.

It was noted that Sir Lewis Ritchie would be on Skye this week to attend the Steering Group meeting and continued to work with NHS Highland on the implementation of the recommendations in his report. There were concerns in the community and they wanted the best possible health care for all of the Island. In terms of recruitment of staff, NHS Highland were in discussions with the Council and the Skye and Lochalsh Housing Association about their staff needs for housing.

The Chair thanked the representatives from NHS Highland for their presentation and looked forward to them attending a future meeting.

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

There was circulated Report No SR/12/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the improvement in Uig station availability was commended and it was advised that Uig Community Trust was in conversation with CMAL who owned the Uig ferry terminal building. They were to consult with the community and it was likely that the building would be handed over and the site cleared, which could affect plans for a new SFRS station in Uig. It was confirmed that the SFRS were considering station developments in both Uig and Portree.

It was clarified that a secondary fire was a fire involving non structures, such as bins, waste, derelict vehicles. Such incidents were reported to other agencies, such as Police Scotland, to address any trends in anti social behaviour.

There was scope for the service to have a short term let operator on Skye given the number of applications to be processed.

In terms of concerns with battery storage facilities, a North area working group had been set up to better understand the issues to be addressed with these facilities and an update on progress on this was provided. This issue was also being discussed nationally in terms of best practice and operational learning in

responding to incidents at battery storage facilities. The SFRS had a team working on renewable energies who would feed information into this conversation. In relation to concerns about retained stations being able to attend and cope with a battery storage facility fire, it was confirmed that they would attend and received the same training as full time members of staff to deal with such incidents.

In response to concerns over crews dealing with incidents over a protracted period and the impact this could have on their mental health and wellbeing, it was confirmed that the welfare of staff was a key priority for the Service and there would be crew rotation in such incidents. It was a national service and extra resources could be brought in from outwith the area if required.

The Committee Noted the Area Performance Report.

7. **SkyeConnect Presentation** **Taisbeanadh SkyeConnect**

Transparency Statement - Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as a previous Director of SkyeConnect. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Simon Cousins, Communications Director and Gary Curley, SkyeConnect were in attendance to give a presentation about SkyeConnect, projects they deliver in the community and some of the challenges they faced.

In discussion, reference was made to the idea of a visitor levy on campervans when visiting Skye, but it was not felt this would receive general community support, given the strong opposition in the past to tolls on the Skye bridge. There was a view amongst some people on Skye that visitor management was poorly managed such as social issues caused by over tourism and anti social behaviour. There should be a focus on ensuring tourism was sustainable and look at how to grow high value tourism. Improved infrastructure was key for tourism and local people. A tourist management plan for Skye and engagement with community trusts and community would help address these issues.

There was support that a visitor levy should include campervans and motorhomes which could be managed through the use of number plate recognition cameras at entry points to Skye. The money generated could be used to improve infrastructure in the local area and towards destination management organisations. There was a need to create more dedicated areas for motorhomes and campervans where a charge would be made for their stay and perhaps legislation could be introduced to stop these vehicles from stopping overnight outwith these dedicated areas. Further, there was ongoing work to progress the Skye cycle network project.

The Committee having expressed their thanks to the representatives for their presentation and acknowledged the work they undertook in the area, Noted the presentation about SkyeConnect and the projects they deliver in the community.

8. **Skye and Raasay Future - Presentation** **Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair**

Transparency Statement - Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as a Council appointee to Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations was in attendance. The organisation delivered third sector support services on behalf of the Highland third sector interface. The Committee were given a presentation about the Empower Skye and Lochalsh Programme the organisation was running which aimed to develop more opportunities for community participation; increase community resilience; improve third sector sustainable growth; enhance health, wellbeing, and welfare outcomes; and develop innovation and knowledge sharing. This would be achieved through the delivery of two projects: Management of Skye and Raasay Future (SARF) Plan; and Skye and Lochalsh Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Collaboration. Information on funding, activities and timeline for these projects were provided.

In discussion, it was welcomed that the projects within SARF were to be reviewed and updated. The SARF Project Board would be handed over from the Council by the end of August and would continue to have Elected Member and Council officer input at their meetings. Dates for meetings of the Board would be sent to Elected Members. The Skye and Lochalsh Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Collaboration directory was welcomed and it would be circulated widely in the community.

The Committee thanked the Chief Officer for attending the meeting and otherwise Noted the presentation and looked forward to continued engagement on the projects within the Empower Skye and Lochalsh Programme.

9. Roads Maintenance Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chàradh Rathaidean

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR//24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. The report provided an update on the Area Roads Capital Programme 2024/25, including works completed and additional works programmed for the remainder of the financial year.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, it was highlighted that the additional funds for roads maintenance was very welcome and would increase the amount to be spent from £0.5m to £3m in this area. The lobbying by the Council of the Scottish Government to provide these additional funds and the work of Officers to identify where this money was best spent was acknowledged. This combined with a Islands infrastructure funding application and local Members disaggregated budget would provide further additionality for roads maintenance.

Further, the roads team were congratulated for the amount of work undertaken in poor weather over the summer period. It was noted that the Roads Operations Manager had committed to contacting Community Councils on planned works

affecting their area, so that this could be carried out with best value for money to communities and trying to minimise delays to road users.

The Committee Noted the roads maintenance update contained in the report.

**10. Winter Service Plan for 2024/25
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2024/25**

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR/ /24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, which provided details of the 2024/25 Winter Service Plan for Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

In discussion, delivering salt heaps to rural areas early did make a difference and relieved some of the pressure on the roads team. There was good community engagement and participation on winter maintenance and officers were happy to work with communities on this. The suggestion of communities being able to take salt from salt heaps themselves would be considered as there would need to be an assurance that the public had the means to do this and that the salt would be used on public roads.

Continuing, the work of the roads team in keeping roads open during winter was commended. The need to assist community workers/care workers in winter conditions to reach their workplace or clients was highlighted. Partnership working was key to this situation and the Roads Manager was keen to work with partners on this to provide assistance whilst recognising that there was a budget and winter maintenance policy that had to be adhered to.

There was to be a winter service leaflet prepared for each operational area to highlight to the public the primary and secondary routes to be gritted in winter conditions. It was welcomed that salt bins had been secured so that the salt did not deteriorate in the rain. The roads team would also do its best to clear pavements when resources allowed this. In terms of pavements in Portree, Uig and Broadford that were trunk roads, Officers would work with Bear Scotland to clear footpaths on trunk roads.

Thereafter, the Committee Approved the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**11. Bereavement Services Project Updates
Cunntasan às Ùr mu Phròiseact nan Seirbheisean Bàis**

There was circulated Report No. SR//24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update on the work being undertaken on burial ground capacity and new burial grounds in the Skye and Raasay area.

Following commentary on the report by the Bereavement Services Project Manager, it was welcomed that good progress was being made with plans for extensions to Portree and Dunvegan burial grounds. It was noted that land investigations were being carried out at Skeabost/Borve and it was hoped suitable

land could be found soon as the current burial ground was now closed. In terms of Cille a'Bhealaich, Staffin burial ground, there was 7 years capacity and additional ground would be identified for additional capacity for the future. It was understood there was no available land for an extension at Ashaig burial, but this would be confirmed to Councillor J Finlayson.

The Committee Noted:-

- i. the progress of burial ground extensions in the Skye and Raasay area.
- ii. the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting the following item was taken after item 6 on the agenda.

**12. The Storr – Update Report 24/25
An Stòrr – Aithisg Ùrachaidh 24/25**

Transparency Statement - Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had family members working for the Council. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There was circulated Report No. SR/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate which provided progress at The Old Man of Storr (The Storr).

Following commentary on the report by Officers, during which it was highlighted that projections showed there could be up to 300,000 visitors to The Storr this year and it was ranked in the top ten places to visit in the world by TripAdvisor. The importance of stakeholder engagement, the Project Board and local Elected Members to the success of the project was also highlighted, as was the opportunity to create local employment and half of surplus income would be kept for spending in the local area. The formal opening of the The Storr centre was to be held later in the day. The project was awarded the Convener's Award at the recent Highland Council Staff Recognition Awards ceremony which was extremely well received by all staff working on the project.

In discussion, Members congratulated all those involved in this project which would be a great visitor centre for this iconic tourist destination and it would be used as a template for future projects. This was an evolving project and the Project team would continue to gather information from the site and make changes when required. The centre would also provide opportunities to support gaelic, local history and environmental education. The supply chain to build the centre was impressive with local contractors involved and local suppliers products where on sale at the centre, which would create community wealth in the area. The staff at the centre were experienced and highly motivated and would be great ambassadors for the area.

Continuing, knowing how long it takes to develop projects, consideration should be given now to extending the car parking at the site to cater for more visitors. The management of traffic at the centre also had to be looked at given the volume of traffic.

The Committee Noted:-

- i. the ongoing local Member involvement and established governance through an Officer-led cross-Service Project Board;
- ii. the ongoing partnership working including with NatureScot, SkyeConnect, and the local community, including suppliers;
- iii. the significant achievements being delivered by the Project and the continued progress being made; and
- iv. that regular reports will continue to be taken to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee.

13. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee Noted the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2024/25:-

Skye & Lochalsh Junior Football Association - Junior Football Season - £760
Minginish Community Association - Cairn Plaque - £300
Skye Events – 40th Anniversary ½ marathon & 10k - £500

14. Dunvegan Community Council Ward Discretionary Fund Application

Urgent item – This urgent item of business was considered by the Committee as a decision was required by Dunvegan Community Council to meet the timescales for funding of the project.

There was circulated Report No. SR/17/24 by the Head of Community Support, Contact and Engagement relating to an application from Dunvegan Community Council to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Ward Discretionary Fund for funding to support costs associated with a visitor information project. Given that the application was for retrospective costs, this required to be considered at Area Committee.

The project aimed to inform visitors to Skye about traffic management and visitor facilities. It involved installing signage on lampposts in targeted areas and managing a website with visitor information. The applicant was seeking £1,393.80 from the Ward Discretionary Fund towards the total cost of £2,893.80.

Members were supportive of the application. The need for passing place signage was also highlighted as many tourists did not understand what passing places were for. It was advised that there was now a dedicated member of staff dealing with passing places and signs within the roads team to carry out this work.

The Committee Agreed the application for funding from Dunvegan Community Council in the amount of £1,393.80 from the Ward Discretionary Fund.

The meeting ended at 12.45 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 27 August, 2024 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)
Mr J C Grafton
Ms S Fanet

Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Ms L Siggers
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager, West and Mid Highland
Ms K MacLeod, Roads Operations Manager - Lochaber
Ms A Martin, FW2040 Project Manager
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer - Corporate

Also in attendance:-

Mr C Scott, Station Commander, Lochaber District, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

Ms K Willis in the Chair

BUSINESS

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee Noted that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

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

There was circulated Report No LA/14/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

Following commentary on the report by the Local Senior Officer, it was clarified that a primary fire related to a dwelling fire, whereas as secondary fire would be a shed or outbuilding. Also, 2 specific road traffic accidents had

resulted in the majority of the increase in road casualties for the period in Lochaber. There had been a significant amount of casualties involved in these incidents and there had been good partnership working from emergency services to help those involved. Also, home fire safety visits were prioritised at those people most at risk, identified by agencies that referred them to the SFRS. There was no definitive evidence that people were using sub standard equipment to heat their homes due to the cost of living crises, but an undertaking was given to communicate to SFRS staff to look out for this in their home safety visits. Further, there had been no trends identified relating to deliberate fires.

Continuing, whilst congestion on roads could cause delays, this did not put people's lives at risk as there were appliances, other than Fort William, that could be sent to incidents. In terms of staffing in the retained fire service, there had been an increase in recruitment to the service last year in Lochaber. The service were looking at innovative ways to recruit and retain staff.

It was highlighted that the number of short term lets were increasing and it was queried what effect this was having on the service who required to carry out fire safety checks. It was advised that this had no effect on front line operational staff, as there was a dedicated team to deal with the increase in short term licensing applications.

The Committee Noted the Area Performance Report.

5. Fort William 2040 Annual Update Fios às Ùr mu An Gearasdan 2040

There was circulated Report No. LA/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update on the progress of the Fort William 2040 (FW2040) Masterplan and Delivery Programme.

Following a summary of the report by the FW2040 Project Manager, Members supported the extension of the Project Manager post for FW2040 for a further 24 months.

It was noted that a short-life working group had been established to address the traffic and travel impacts resulting from the operation of the canal swing bridge at Banavie. It would look at how the operation of the bridge can be better co-ordinated with the other uses on the road.

Information on FW2040 projects were available online via the Highland Councils website. If there was a specific proposal for community engagement additional ways of engagement could be set up, such as the Town Centre Masterplan was displayed in the local library to try and make it accessible as possible. Also, it was intended that next year there would be another community engagement event on FW2040 projects. There would be a conversation amongst officers on how to maintain community engagement on FW2040.

There was no set criteria on what projects were included in the FW2040 programme, but consideration would be given to how well a proposed project aligned with its general principles around FW2040 i.e. making Fort William a better place to live, work and visit.

An update on the various stages for producing a final document on the Town Centre Masterplan was provided. It was hoped the final document would be available within the next 2 months. Thereafter, focus would be on progressing proposals that had general support.

An alternative new helicopter landing site in Fort William had been identified and there were discussions amongst various local parties about the costs of developing the site and securing funding.

The importance of lobbying politicians was highlighted in order to gain their support in progressing some of the main items in the programme, such as the new hospital, traffic and transport.

The Committee:

i. Noted the progress that had been made with the individual projects within the FW2040 Masterplan as summarised at Appendix 1: FW2040 Projects Update July 2024.

ii. Noted the wider developments that had been implemented in 2023 to enhance the delivery of the programme, specifically:

a) an extensive programme of community engagement undertaken on the proposed Fort William Town Centre Masterplan.

b) the establishment of a short-life working group to address the traffic and travel impacts resulting from the operation of the canal swing bridge at Banavie.

c) continued engagement on specific issues and with particular interest groups through the FW2040 Community Stakeholder Group and FW2040 Transport Sub-Group.

iii. Noted the extension of the Project Manager post for FW2040 for a further 24-months.

iv. supported identified priority FW2040 work areas for the coming year as summarised in section 5 of the report.

6. Winter Service Plan 2024/25 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2024/25

There was circulated Report No. LA/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed the 2024/25 Winter Service Plan for Lochaber Area.

It was highlighted that the Council publishes “Winter Services” leaflets for each operational area providing the public with information on snow clearing and gritting of Council roads along with maps showing the priority attributed to individual roads. Community self-help was also being encouraged under the Councils “Winter Resilience” scheme whereby communities can submit an application via their community council to carry out footway gritting operations within an agreed area. In addition, extra salt heaps and grit bins had been placed in targeted areas and any information from Members/Community Councils on further areas in the community to be supplied with extra salt would be welcome.

The staff resources in the roads team was close to full complement. Also, in terms of contingency plans for flooding on roads, it was advised that maintenance on culverts, blocked ditches etc to drain water from roads was a high priority for the roads team.

The Committee Approved the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**7. Allocation Process for Area Share of Invitation to Pay Income
Pròiseas Riarachaidh airson Co-roinn Sgìreil de Theachd-a-steach
Cuireadh airson Pàigheadh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place inviting the Committee to agree a process for the allocation of area Invitation to Pay income within the community in which it has been generated.

If the proposal was approved, contact would be made with the Community Council with guidance on submitting applications for invitation to pay income. They would also be consulted on whether the income was to be used for the Mallaig area or a wider area.

The Committee:

- i. Approved the proposed process for the area allocation of Invitation to Pay income.
- ii. Noted that the process will be reviewed after the first year of implementation.
- iii. Noted authorisation of spend up to £10,000 would be assigned to the Senior Community Development Manager and £10,000 or over would be subject to Area Committee approval.

**8. Fort William Business Improvement District
Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais a' Ghearasdain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, which provided a summary of the Fort William Business Improvement District Steering Group's proposals to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) for Fort William. The report also explained the Council's involvement and support provided. It was highlighted that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that Highland Council had no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID at its meeting held on 22 August 2024.

Information was provided on the ballot of local businesses to determine whether the BID goes ahead. The Council would also get a vote on any properties it had in the BID area that had no tenant in them. There was a concern that the Council, who was not a business, would be paying into the BID with public money.

Further, a view was expressed that while being supportive of BID areas, there was disappointment that the BID area would cut Fort William in half in that businesses on one side of the river lochy would have to pay for the BID while businesses on the other side would not. It should have included the whole of the Fort William town. Also, Members were being asked to agree the BID, but

for 3 Members there would be no cost to their electorate and they were being asked to impose a burden on people not in their Ward.

Ultimately, it would be down to businesses in the BID area whether to support the BID or not in the ballot. Businesses were encouraged to participate in the BID process so they understood the proposals, objectives and what it would mean for their business and contributions that they would have to make should the BID be supported.

The Committee:-

- i. Noted the proposals for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Fort William;
- ii Noted the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that Highland Council had no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID at its meeting held on 22 August 2024; and
- * iii. Agreed to recommend to full Council that it supports the Fort William BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 19 September 2024.

**9. Highland Council Representative on the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust
Rìochdaire Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd air Urras Dualchais Eilean Eige**

The Committee was invited to appoint 1 Member to serve as a Director of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust.

Ms K Willis was nominated by Mr A Baldrey and this was seconded by Ms L Siggers.

There being no other nominations, the Committee therefore Agreed that Ms K Willis be appointed as a Director of the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust.

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

The Committee Noted the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2024/25:-

Ward 11

CAMAS - Programme of Events 2024 - £950
West Highland Museum - Expansion & Upgrade Project - £1,000
Knoydart Foundation - Community Venison Value Added Building Project - £900
An Aird Events Ltd - Lochaber Live - £600
Knoydart Foundation – Website rebuild - £1,825
Highlife Highland - Highland Archive Service Isle of Eigg workshop £356
Arisaig & District Community Council – Christmas Lights - £1,000

Ward 21

CFINE - Fareshare in Highland (Fort William & Ardnamurchan) £366
West Highland Museum - Expansion & Upgrade Project - £1,000

The Island Park Community Field SCIO - Kinlochleven Gala Day 2024 - £500
An Aird Events Ltd - Lochaber Live - £900
Acharacle Community Council – Community noticeboard- £862.37

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 14 May, 2024 which were approved by the Council on 27 June, 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 11.35 a.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 27 August 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Gale

Ms M Hutchison (remote)

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison (remote)

Ms L Niven (remote)

In attendance:

Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager

Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager

Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager

Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer

Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector C Smith, Police Scotland

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

Mr R Gale in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr M Baird.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Sutherland County Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/12/24 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the reduction in the number of fatalities from road traffic collisions was encouraging given the increase in traffic volumes and highlighting this was due

to the proactive work of the roads police officers and preventative work undertaken by the Council;

- confirmation was sought and provided that speeding detections were carried out both by road patrols and camera safety vans and that Members feedback on any areas of concern would be welcomed;
- the reasons for the increase in unlawful use of vehicles and what environmental offences encompassed. The Chief Inspector advised he would report back to Members with further information on these matters;
- an update was sought and provided that the police officer post in Tongue was in the process of being filled and the Chief Inspector would provide Members with a further update in the near future;
- concern at the frustration and nuisance caused by slow moving traffic on single track roads on the North Coast 500 in the Durness area and the importance of educating drivers and signage in this regard; and
- concern at the access young people had to drugs in some rural communities and the importance of encouraging Members and the public to feedback any information to the Police. The Chief Inspector advised he would share with Members information on the partners intelligence portal, details of which he provided.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024.

5. **Winter Service Plan for 2024/25** **Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an update was sought and provided on the changes to the policy for grit/salt bins and it was confirmed details of the winter resilience scheme would be shared with Members;
- in response to a query, it was explained that currently salt barns were located in Lairg and Lochinver to provide for dry storage. Planning permission had been granted for structures in Brora and Kinlochbervie, although currently there was no provision in the budget for these facilities;
- it would be reassuring for Members and communities to know the procedure for and local contractors to be engaged in exceptional circumstances to assist in clearing deep snow at short notice. It was confirmed this matter would be discussed with Members outwith the meeting as there were issues of commercial confidentiality;
- in regard to the above, it was reassuring that additional help from external contractors was available in the special circumstances described; and
- an update was sought and provided on the gritting fleet ready to be deployed in winter and plans to hire vehicles pending the arrival of new vehicles.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25.

**6. Dornoch Common Good Fund – Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich - Sgeama Cuireadh gus Pàigheadh airson
Parcadh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, the take up of the scheme and profit returned to the Dornoch Common Good Fund was welcomed.

The Committee **AGREED** that £956.00 costs incurred by the Council's Parking Enforcement Team to operate the invitation to pay parking scheme at the Sutherland Common Good sites be charged against the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/15/24 by the Head of Community Support, Contact and Engagement and Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Committee:

- i **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Dornoch Common Good Fund;
- ii **AGREED** to homologate community grants for 2023/24 and 2024/25 (to date); and
- iii **AGREED** to delegate to the Community Development Manager authority to approve Dornoch Common Good grants up to £10,000 within the annually set budget and following consultation with relevant Ward Members

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

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

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

Lairg Community Council - Lairg Bird Hide upgrade	£2,000.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£1,600.00
Farr Youth Development – High Life Highland - Day Trip to Durness	£240.00
The Sutherland Community Partnership - Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust - Kyle Feeds	£1,000.00
Lairg & District Community Initiative - Replace Flag Pole	£500.00
North West Training Centre - Learning Programme 23-24	£1,750.00
Farr Edge 2000 – Continue Service	£1,240.00

1330

Tykes Young Carers Project Ward 1 – Programme of Respite Residential	£2,500.00
Culrain Hall – Heating Upgrade	£1,200.00
Scourie Community Development Company – Safe Parking for Affordable Housing, Scourie School	£1,000.00
North West Schools PC – Extra- curricular activities	£1,000.00
East Sutherland School Sports Association	£1,000.00
Scourie Community Development Company – Spring Wellbeing (Scourie)	£440.00
Total	£15,790.00

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

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

Clyne Heritage Society (CHS) - Aultcraggie Roundhouse Community Archaeological Excavation	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club – Victorian Benches	£700.00
East Sutherland Camera Club – Highland Challenge 2023	£600.00
Sutherland Women’s Football Club – Transport Funds	£1,600.00
Go Golspie – Caretaker Post	£500.00
The Sutherland Community Partnership – Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Dornoch Academy – Edinburgh Book Festival Literacy Trip	£1,175.00
The Embo Trust – Old School Reset	£600.00
Highlife Highland – Dornoch Youth Summer Services Programme	£1,000.00
Tykes – Programme of Respite Residential	£3,000.00
Embo Trust (Urras Euraboil) – Embo Community Centre Resilience	£999.99
East Sutherland Schools Sports Association	£2,560.00
Helmsdale PS PC – Crossing Patroller Hut	£850.00
Golspie Youth Action Project	£1,415.00
Total	£15,999.99

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 14 May 2024, which were approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 28 August 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce (Remote)	Mr P Logue (Remote)
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Mr D Louden
Ms L Dundas (substitute)	Mr A MacKintosh
Ms S Fanet (Chair)	Ms L Niven (Remote)
Mr J Grafton	Ms M Ross
Mr A Graham	Ms K Willis (Vice Chair) (Remote)

Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt
Mr R MacKintosh
Ms M Hutchison

In attendance:

Mr B Cameron, Interim Head of Housing and Building Maintenance
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead – Environment, Development and Active Travel
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change and Energy Team Manager
Mr R Macdonald, Energy Manager
Ms F Daschofsky, Project Manager
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager
Ms D Morris, Climate Change Coordinator
Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms H Loonsk, Climate Resilience Manager, Highland Adapts

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

Ms S Fanet in the Chair

Business

Preliminaries

The Chair gave a verbal update on the following Good News items:

EV Rally

Highland Council hosted the start of the rally, a 2-day, near 600-mile event, travelling around the North Coast 500 route, before coming back to Inverness and travelling south to Edinburgh. The rally aimed to highlight the benefits of going electric, highlight innovation within the field of EV charging, as well as clean energy.

Awards

- The Climate Change and Energy Team had been successful at the Council's Staff Recognition Awards held in June 2024.
- The Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme was the winner of the "Just transition to a Net Zero economy". The Climate Change & Energy Team spearheaded transformative whole-house retrofit projects helping households in fuel poverty.
- The Energy Benchmarking Tool won the "Delivering Excellence Award". This innovative tool empowered the Council in its journey towards Net Zero by providing vital insights into energy consumption patterns, costs, and performance efficiencies across the Council's diverse property portfolio.
- The Climate Change and Energy Team was nominated in "Regional Council or Local Authority Body of the year" at the Scottish National Energy Efficiency Awards 2024.
- The team was also nominated as "Large Scale Project of the year" and was announced "winner" for their innovative approach to building multi funded projects.
- The Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme 23/24 had also been shortlisted for the National Energy Efficiency Awards 2024 - National Multi-Measure Project of the Year. This award recognised the efforts of all those involved in delivering a successful large scale energy efficiency project, where multiple energy efficiency measures of more than one type had been installed.

CIOB Sustainability Ambassador

Sharon Barrie, Highland Council's Service Lead – Design & Construction and member of the Built Estate & Energy thematic group had been appointed to the Chartered Institute of Building "Sustainability Ambassador" for the Scotland Region.

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms S Atkin.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Climate Change Committee.

4. Net Zero Programme and Thematic Group Leads Update Prògram Neoni Lom agus Cunntas às Ùr mu Stiùirichean Bhuidhnean Cuspaireil

There had been circulated Report No CCC/12/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was queried if new commitments would be placed upon Highland Council due to the Flow Country being designated as a World Heritage Site. In addition, it was queried if the Council would work alongside the RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection for Birds) at the site. The Flow Country was also described as a good contributor of community wellbeing;
- further information was sought and received, whether the anticipated staff pay awards, and cuts to the Nature Restoration Funding would impact budget allocation towards addressing the ecological emergency workstream;
- Members expressed thanks for an excellent report, and to officers for the comprehensive and significant amount of work undertaken to date;
- it was queried what steps the Council was taking towards including the public to address the ecological emergency as there were risks of unintended consequences if this was not carried out;
- Members were supportive of the Manage the Estate for Wildlife and Nature project, as this demonstrated the Council was prioritising nature projects;
- the Members' workshop had been successful and additional future workshops would be welcomed;
- in light of the recruitment of new Planning Ecologists, it was queried how the Governments planned block on staff recruitment would affect the Council;
- the Caol and Balintore Energy Efficiency in Homes projects were welcomed. In this regard positive feedback from local tenants and private owners had been expressed regarding the project, and information had been sought on how they could be included in the energy improvements project as individuals;
- regarding energy efficiency works it was confirmed that the local housing association had pulled out of the agreement with Highland Council in Lochaber as it was struggling to bring in private owners, therefore it was queried how private owners could be encouraged to join the agreement of energy improvements;
- it was highlighted that the Planning, Land Use and Environment and Sustainable Travel had not included discussion on improvements to bus travel in communities;
- the lack of open space grass cutting had been a contentious issue in 2024, therefore Members welcomed the Climate Change team's collaborative working with the Amenities team and hoped that a strategic plan could be developed to manage reductions in grass cutting for biodiversity. In this regard further concern was expressed over the lack of grass cutting, hedges and shrub bed maintenance as on some occasions they presented health and safety issues for pedestrians;
- despite good progress with the Caol and Balintore projects, it was felt that the UK in general was far behind European counterparts with accelerating carbon free housing improvements; and
- regarding older housing stock properties that might not be suitable for programmed energy efficiencies, it was queried what the long term plan was for these property types.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the project brief templates as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** this was an iterative process and further project brief templates would be brought to the Climate Change Committee for consideration.

5. Net Zero – Communications and Engagement Conaltradh agus Com-pàirteachadh

There had been circulated Report No CCC/13/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- suggestion was made that the report Aims be changed to confirm the Council's transition to Net Zero and to become a climate-ready 'region' or 'community';
- regarding page 26 of the report, it was felt that Community Councils should be included on the list of participants to input into the process. In this regard, Community Councils had raised their concerns to Members concerning grass cutting and a perceived lack of strategy over areas to be cut or left for wilding;
- it was questioned if all Highland Council job descriptions should be updated to reflect the importance of delivering Net Zero, and if every Council Service should have a nominated Net Zero ambassador, including nominating Member representatives across the political spectrum;
- it was confirmed that the Climate Festival was commencing in September 2024 with events across Highland. Further information was available on the Highlands and Islands Climate Festival Facebook page;
- it was recognised that successful communications with communities was a two way process;
- concern was raised that Net Zero information responsibilities could not just be passed onto schoolteachers to include within the curriculum due to a lack of time or understanding of the subject. In this regard, it was felt that alternative ways to educate children in schools should be explored in more detail; and
- it was requested that School meal waste processes be included in the Net zero strategy.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- * i. **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** that the Council approve the Net Zero Communications and Engagement Strategy; and
- ii. **NOTED** the Net Zero Ambassador Network would be crucial to the successful delivery of the Communications and Engagement Strategy.

6. Training Trèanadh

There had been circulated Report No CCC/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was requested that Members and Community Councils be included in the various training packages for their valuable input;
- it was felt that Members needed additional training especially if they were to act in an advisory capacity to local Community Councils, such as advice on mitigation processes. In this regard, it was queried if the upcoming workshop discussing Climate Science would include a complete overview of all aspects of the climate challenge; and
- it was hoped that food production information be included in future comprehensive training sessions as it was a large contributor to carbon emissions.

The Committee **NOTED** the content and delivery of the Climate Solutions Workshop.

7. Highland Adapts Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais mun Ghàidhealtachd a' Freagarrachadh

There had been circulated Report No CCC/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Ms H Loonsk, Climate Resilience Manager, Highland Adapts, gave a presentation providing an update on Highland Adapts' work programme since 2021, including the Highland Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment and Highland Charter for Climate, Nature, and Health. It also gave a preview of the next steps for Highland Adapts, including business development planning and support for community-driven climate resilience projects.

During discussion Members expressed thanks for the comprehensive and balanced report and requested a copy of the full Paul Watkiss Associates report. In this regard, it was queried what project brief the report was based upon, whether it was based on current challenges or future risk and opportunities.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and the report and activities achieved by Highland Adapts to date, as well as the future work schedule as detailed in sections 6 and 7 of the report.

8. Circular Economy Eaconamaidh Chearacallach

There had been circulated Report No CCC/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- a training workshop on the Circular Economy, perhaps by Zero Waste Scotland, to strengthen Members decision-making knowledge base was requested;
- there was a need to educate people on the Circular Economy, but to balance needs against availability;
- it was felt that the next stage of the process would be the identification of specific targets that required to be met;
- it was queried if there had been engagement with local food retailers to discuss a reduction of plastic waste packaging material;
- regarding empty Council buildings, it was queried if utility standing charges were still being paid. In addition, it was queried if staff were taking proactive steps to turn lights and heating off when not required to save energy and money;
- in terms of efficient use of resources, it was queried if superior hot tar products could be used to fill roads potholes as cold tar appeared to wash out quite quickly in wet inclement weather conditions; and
- information was sought regarding the Councils plastic waste recycling process, as this could be used to educate local communities on best recycling practice.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the requirement to align the Circular Principles identified in the Council's Net Zero Strategy with the Circular Economy (Scotland) Bill; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support the approach to align and embed Circular Economy Principles into the Council's Day to day operations.

**9. Net Zero Audit and Survey Programme Update
Sgrùdadh Neoni Lom agus Prògram Suirbhidh**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to officers for the report, and for the very comprehensive work undertaken to assess buildings;
- it was queried how buildings deemed beyond remediation were assessed, and what the next steps would be for these identified buildings; and
- regarding Appendix 1 within the report, further information was sought and received, on how the priority scoring was determined.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. proposed programme of works; and
- ii. resulting indicative report deliverables.

**10. Climate Change Performance Monitoring Report Q1 2024/25
Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde R1 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was felt that monitoring the performance of climate change should be prioritised higher up the agenda. Overall, it was felt that the Committee was finding its feet and these issues would be fine-tuned in due course; and
- attention was drawn to a potential typo in the report at page 119, item 7.2 regarding the Data figure of 36,147 to a Target Value of 47,605 as the figures were increasing rather than decreasing.

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

The meeting concluded at 1.05pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of the meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 29 August 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Dr C Birt	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms K MacLean (sub for L Kraft)
Mr D Fraser	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr J Grafton (sub for R Gale)	Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mrs B Jarvie	Mrs M Reid
Ms L Johnston	Mrs T Robertson (sub for A MacLean)
Ms E Knox	Mrs M Ross (sub)
Mr P Logue (sub for R Gunn)	
Ms J McEwan (sub for A MacDonald)	

Non-Members present:

Mr M Baird	Mr D Macpherson
Mr B Boyd (remote)	Mr C Munro
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr M Reiss
Mr S Kennedy	Mr R Stewart

NHS Highland representatives:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland
 Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing
 Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care

Third sector representatives in attendance:

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

Participating Officials:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
 Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
 Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer, Integrated People Services
 Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work
 Mr I Kyle, Lead Officer Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance
 Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health
 Ms C McLaughlan, Programme Manager (The Promise)
 Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
 Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

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

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale, Mr R Gunn, Ms L Kraft, Mr A MacDonald, Mr J McGillivray, Ms M Smith, and Mrs A MacLean.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

**4. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** updates on the following:

- Care Home Olympics;
- Rural Social Work and the National Care Service;
- Social work governance;
- Refugee Week Events;
- Staff Awards; and
- Vision 2026, which would take place on Friday 30 August 2024 to celebrate the launch of Highland's Children and Young People Participation Strategy.

It was explained there would be two inspection type activities taking place as follows:

- Social Work governance inspection – from July to December 2024; and
- Justice Social Work self-evaluation – September to November 2024.

The Chair thanked all staff involved in the projects detailed.

**5. Health and Social Care - Revenue Monitoring Budget and Performance Report - Q1 2024-2025 and Final Out-turn 2023-24
Slàinte is Cùram Sòisealta – Buidseat Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Aithisg Coileanaidh – R1 2024–2025 agus Toradh Deireannach 2023–24**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/13/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was disappointing that Quarter 1 figures were not available and it was hoped they would be provided to Members as soon as they were available;
- it was queried whether there were sufficient residential places in Highland to return all Highland Looked After children, and it was clarified children would only be returned if there was a suitable place, noting some were in foster care, not residential homes;

- the ongoing recruitment challenges were on the Corporate Risk Register and the aim was to fill them as soon as possible. More needed to be done to make caring in the Highlands a more attractive career, especially for young people;
- a summary of the recruitment and training timescale for foster carers was sought and provided, and attention was drawn to the need to find innovative means of attracting people to becoming foster carers;
- the 20-day complaint target was thought to be unrealistic for some complex cases, but this was set nationally;
- noting that, at present, Service Plans were on hold, information was sought and provided on the position with the Service's delivery plan and workstreams, and on the reporting intentions for the people-centred solution portfolio, which would be reported to this Committee and to the Joint Monitoring Committee;
- information was sought and provided on the Solihull Approach to support mental health for families, with further information requested outwith the meeting by Mr Grafton;
- the budget situation, and Lead Agency approach in relation to the provision of Adult Social Care by NHS Highland, as commissioned by the Council, was summarised, as was the Council's budget for mental health officers;
- concern was expressed that the savings gap was being filled by unintentional savings as a result of recruitment challenges and it was queried whether reserves would be required to cover budget gaps if all vacancies were filled. A brief summary was provided of some of the budget issues and further information could be provided outwith the meeting if required;
- the reason for the increased sick leave figures from 2022-23 to 2023-24 was queried, and information sought and provided on measures in place to support staff to return to work and reduce levels of sickness absence. This could be further discussed outwith the meeting;
- the cost of the closure of the Cradlehall Care Home was queried and it was asked if there were any plans to find places for residents closer to home. This could be further discussed with Mr Macpherson outwith the meeting;
- with reference to the need to return Highland children being looked after elsewhere, reference was made to a large family home having been purchased by the Council in Inverness;
- school nurses being at Advanced Nurse Practitioner level was welcomed; and
- work to improve early years health protection and prevention was welcomed and the staff involved were thanked. It was hoped progress with this would be reported in future.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the final out-turn position for 2023/24 as detailed within the report;
- ii. that savings for 2024/27 had been identified and would be delivered under the People Centred Solutions Portfolio as part of the Council's new Delivery Plan programme;
- iii. and scrutinised the Service's performance, improvement and risk information;
- iv. the progress being made in establishing the People Centred Solutions Portfolio programmes and projects as part of the Council's Delivery Plan and

- v. that the Chair would investigate the availability of the Quarter 1 Budget Figures for distribution to the Committee.

6. Integrated Children's Services Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnaid Seirbheisean Chloinne Amalaichte

There had been circulated Report No HCW/14/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Vision 2026, which would take place on Friday 30 August 2024 to celebrate the launch of Highland's Children and Young People Participation Strategy, was welcomed. The significant response from young people to the consultation was welcomed;
- the family and youth team underspends were queried, and related to vacancies;
- the division of the management of various services for children between the Council and NHS Highland was queried, and a summary was provided of the Lead Agency model and the framework in place to ensure effective partnership working;
- digital linkage between the Council and NHS Highland remained a problematic issue;
- the Director of Public Health referred to the importance of primary care as a key point of access to services for young people;
- information was sought and provided on efforts being undertaken to tackle school refusers, including the importance of autism awareness;
- the interlinked nature of many of the reports on the agenda was highlighted;
- concern was expressed in relation to the reported statistics that suggested children felt less listened to as they progressed through school. It was thought that the mentoring programme was helping with this;
- disappointment was expressed at the lengthy waiting times for autism and other neuro-divergent condition diagnoses;
- although smoking amongst young people was decreasing, the increasing amount of vaping was of concern, and vaping statistics should be included in the report as well as smoking;
- dismay was expressed at the statistic that suggested 20% of S4 pupils were taking drugs on a weekly basis, however some concerns about the validity of the statistics were expressed. The preventative work being undertaken to tackle drug problems was summarised and included a substance awareness toolkit;
- concern was expressed at the figures for physiotherapy and occupational health referral services and it was explained that more recent figures had shown an improvement;
- a future update on NHS Highland transformation of services would be welcomed; and
- given the overlap between Health & Social Care, and Education, in relation to young people, a joined-up approach to tackling rising levels of anti-social behaviour was urged, to include all necessary partners and agencies. Reference was made to ongoing work to tackle this called Reimagining Justice, which could be further discussed outwith the meeting; and

- particular reference was made to two pressure groups in Caithness whose aims were to achieve better treatment for neuro-diverse children and young people, including improved waiting times for diagnosis and treatment.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- work undertaken by the children's services planning partnership over the last few months in delivering the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023 – 2026; and
- Integrated Children's Services Boards Performance management framework.

7. Keeping the Promise in Highland A' Cumail a' Gheallaidh sa Ghàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/15/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the Programme Manager (The Promise) produced a regular newsletter, which was available to Members on request;
- the work to support families to try to keep children at home was welcomed and praised, and it was vital that children who were removed from their family were fully supported. Access to welfare funding was necessary for kinship carers and it was important that unaccompanied young asylum seekers were offered similar levels of support and care;
- given the importance of the national care service, it was queried whether remote and rural data and issues were being properly taken into account;
- with reference to the trauma summit on 2 September 2024, the need to embed a trauma-informed approach across all agencies was emphasised, and assurance was sought that there was adequate senior leadership buy-in. It was clarified that the summit would not be recorded, but some presentations etc could be made available;
- key themes and issues that were relevant to the Promise were the home environment, nutrition, housing, transport, economic development, poverty and the wider public health environment;
- further detail and a summary of the screening process for the impacts section of the report were sought and provided;
- the importance of the transition from children's to adult services was highlighted;
- the recruitment challenges in the care sector were significant;
- information was sought on the breadth of care facilities across Highland, and on the work required to comply with the UNCRC Scotland Act which came into force on 16 of July 2024; and
- progress on the latest position with regard to Thor House in Caithness was requested.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to support services to #KeepThePromise.

8. Family Centre, Inverness - Self Evaluation Report
Ionad Teaghlaich, Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Fèin-mheasaidh

There had been circulated Report No HCW/16/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the staff at the Family Centre were inspiring and their ambition to support families and improve the lives of children across the Highlands was welcomed;
- the challenges facing remote and rural areas included poverty, lack of access and support. The importance of providing training, transport and funding and to deliver further pilot projects, was summarised, and best practice should be shared with other areas. Members from various wards expressed an interest in these services being expanded to their localities;
- community support for breastfeeding mothers was essential;
- it was queried what measures were being put in place to ensure sustainable and growing services, given the reduced funding to some third sector organisations who were being forced to review their workloads and capacity to provide essential services; and
- Members were welcome to visit the centre and the Chair thanked everyone involved.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to support the aspirations for community family support to grow across Highland.

9. Adult Support and Protection Inspection
Sgrùdadh Taic is Dìon Inbheach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/17/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- careers in care should be made more appealing and valued;
- the lack of community-based care staff in Caithness was a serious concern, and insufficient information was being provided to the community. Attention was drawn to imaginative recruitment schemes that were being explored. Due to commercial confidentiality, this could not be further discussed but information would be provided to Members as soon as available;
- the societal shared responsibility for vulnerable adults was emphasised; and
- assurance was sought and provided that deaths from drugs, alcohol and suicide were being investigated and solutions worked on. Although drug deaths in Highland had reduced in the last year, it was important to avoid complacency, and a summary was provided of work being done at different levels.

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the Inspection Report and the accompanying improvement plan and **AGREED** that information about the care home provision in Caithness be provided once deemed appropriate.

10. National Care Service Update
Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Chùraim Nàiseanta

There had been circulated Report No HCW/18/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- all Members were urged to engage in the review process by 20 September 2024, and attend the workshop that would be organised;
- attention was drawn to the lack of information being provided to the public about future changes that might be experienced by residents and patients. It was suggested that many older people felt they had a significant contribution to make, and full engagement with them was urged;
- in relation to Self-Directed Support, it was important to continue to involve families and this could be discussed further offline with Mr Boyd;
- continuity of care was essential; and
- the national treatment centre was welcomed, although had raised concerns it might inadvertently lead to larger care homes that were not at the centre of communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the position in relation to the legislation seeking to implement the National Care Service which would result in the introduction of a single model of integration and the consequent removal of the Lead Agency Model; and
- ii. that further updates providing clarity on the legal, financial and governance implications would come forward to future meetings of the Council and this Committee as appropriate.

11. Forward Planner – Reports and Workshop Dates
Planadair air Adhart – Cinn-latha Aithisgean is Bhùithtean-obrach

The Forward Planner had been circulated and was **NOTED**.

12. Champions Updates
Cunntasan nan Curaidhean

The Committee **NOTED** updates from the following Champions:

Trauma – Cllr Morven Reid

The Trama summit was being held on 2 September 2024 and Members could email the Programme Manager (The Promise) if they wished to attend. A summary was provided of the plans for the day.

Older Adults – Cllr Thomas MacLennan

This was postponed as Mr MacLennan was unavailable. Mr Boyd gave a summary of the University of the Third Age (U3A), and the benefits for older people.

Children – Cllr Lyndsey Johnston

Ms Johnston had operated a stall at the Highland Youth Parliament informing them of the work of the Children's Champions and had listened to their impressive ideas for improving their communities. She was also involved with The Promise Board and the Children's Services Forum.

**13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. Highland Child Protection Committee held on 24 April 2024;
- ii. Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 27 March 2024; and
- iii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 12 February and 13 May 2024.

The meeting ended at 2.40pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 4 September 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr I Brown
Mrs I Campbell
Ms S Fanet
Mr J Grafton
Mr P Logue

Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr C Munro
Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mr R Stewart

In attendance:

Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer
Dr T Stones, Senior Lead Manager, Professional Learning and Development
Ms C Macklin, Head of Education, Lifelong Learning and Gaelic Services
Ms A Stewart, Corporate Performance Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms F Dalgetty, Chief Executive, Fèis Rois

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

Mr C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J McGillivray.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted at the meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be used in relation to the Gaelic Committee.

4. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as presented.

5. Fèis Rois – Presentation

There had been a presentation by Fiona Dalgetty, Chief Executive of Fèis Rois.

Ms Dalgetty provided an overview and background of the organisation, including their partnerships, funding and opportunities offered to children and young people.

During discussion, Members commended the work of the organisation and were pleased to hear that Fèis Rois continued to reach internationally. In response to a question about the future, Ms Dalgetty stated that she remained hopeful and she provided examples of activities that had been remodelled to suit the times.

The Committee recognised the positive impact on health and wellbeing of children and young people in the area and hoped for their continued success.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Progress Against Gaelic Language Plan 4

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

The Gaelic Policy Officer provided a progress update and stated that current data, and that upcoming, would continue to guide prioritisation and decision making in relation to the outcomes within the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). Upcoming data would be provided to the Committee as it became available.

Since the last Committee, the layout and style of the GLP within the Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS) had been updated and would now be presented as a briefing booklet, designed to make the information more attractive and accessible.

Members were informed that they could view progress at any time against the GLP by accessing PRMS. Members thanked the Corporate Performance Officer for the step-by-step guide which was presented to the Committee.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the comparison between 2011 and 2022 in terms of page 4 of the report;
- detailed information was sought in terms of identifying a possible location for a 3-18 campus in Inverness and it was confirmed that information in relation to the feasibility study would be shared after an upcoming strategic meeting;
- support given to parents to allow Gaelic speaking at home was welcomed and an example was provided regarding the complexities of bilingual learning. Information was sought, and provided, regarding the dynamics at home and what support could be given to parents to overcome any challenges; and
- it was important to keep the 3-18 campus in context with the rest of the Council's plans. The Highland Investment Plan was focussing on the built school estate and it was asked how the 3-18 campus fitted in with the Highland Investment Plan, in

terms of the feasibility study and the possibility of any other campus, Gaelic or otherwise.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. that the next PRMS report available would also be a transitional report between the current GLP and the refreshed GLP.

7. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Highland led other local authorities in terms of what it did to sustain and promote the Gaelic language and culture but, looking forward, it was important this was maintained. The report before Members showed the hard work taking place in Highland;
- there was an opportunity to consider how data was collected in communities where Gaelic was continuing to ascertain what would work and the cost of sustaining progress;
- it was encouraging to see the number of teachers taking part in the various programmes and regular updates as to how this was progressing would be useful. It was important to support teachers and even if a Head Teacher had only a few words of Gaelic it would encourage pupils to learn Gaelic;
- a follow-up study beyond the school years of those who had gone through Gaelic Education, or who had exposure to Gaelic learning, would be useful to see what contribution was being made to the greater Gaelic world;
- in the equality implications of the report, it was suggested neurodiversity should be taken into account as teaching some children a different language might need a different approach; and
- Oideas, a programme developed by the Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, provided podcasts where professionals working in Gaelic Medium Education had a space to share reflections about their work. The importance of this was acknowledged.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the areas of development and progress in GLP Strategic Priority 4.1; and
- ii. the actions to support the Professional Learning of Gaelic Teachers that support the Statutory Requirements for Gaelic Education.

8. Bilingual Policy Progress Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- there was a degree of caution required when using AI and/or online translation. Technology was advancing but the human element was still required to ensure the right context was being used;

- there were instances where contractors had not used the Council's Gaelic translation service;
- the draft Policy on the Use of Bilingual Traffic Signs, currently being revised by the Roads and Infrastructure Department, proposes that bilingual signs would be used for all new road signs, subject to stated exemptions. The Gaelic Team were currently liaising with colleagues to develop a formal and robust assessment, consultation and approval process regarding such proposed exemptions. This would help to ensure that exemptions to the bilingual policy were only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Members were of the view that Gaelic should be used on all road signs and questioned how a bilingual sign could compromise road safety and how it would incur the need for larger foundations. If only one language was to be used then it should be Gaelic given that it was the indigenous language; and
- it was often contended that the inclusion of Gaelic on road signs cost more but it was well documented that the costs involved were negligible.

The Committee **NOTED** the work that had been undertaken in relation to the bilingual policy refresh and the proposed next steps ahead of its relaunch.

9. Gaelic Conference

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Gaelic speakers could suffer from isolation and this reinforced the importance of having access to Gaelic;
- the involvement of minority languages and other cultures in the conference was applauded;
- the conference would showcase Gaelic in action and in a business setting; and
- although the conference would be in-person consideration could be given to either live-streaming or recording it.

The meeting ended at 1.45pm.

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Geàrr-chunntas coinneamh **Comataidh na Gàidhlig** a chumadh ann an Seòmar na Comhairle, Prìomh Oifis na Comhairle, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis air Diciadain, 4 Sultain 2024 aig 10.30m.

An làthair:

Mgr R Bremner

Mgr I MacIlleDhuinn

A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul

A' Bh-uas S Fanet

Mgr I Grafton

Mgr P Logue

Mgr U MacAoidh (air astar)

Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir (air astar)

Mgr C Rothach

A' Bh-uas M NicPheadrais (air astar)

Mgr R Stiùbhart

A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr P Nevin, Àrd-Oifigear Gnìomhach Eadar-amail, Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas

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

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

A' Bh-uas E Rodgers, Oifigear Poileasaidh Gàidhlig

Mgr R MacAoidh, Oifigear Leasachaidh, Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh

A' Bh-uas J NicDhòmhnaill, Prìomh Oifigear Eadar-theangachaidh

An Dr T Stones, Prìomh Mhanaidsear Stiùiridh, Ionnsachadh agus Leasachadh

Proifeiseanta

A' Bh-uas C Macklin, Ceannard Foghlaim, Ionnsachadh Fhad-bheatha & Sheirbheisean Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas Angela Stiùbhart, Oifigear Coileanadh Corporra

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

A' Bh-uas G Nic a' Phearsain, Oifigear Comataidh

Cuideachd an làthair:

A' Bh-uas F Dalgetty, Àrd-Oifigear, Fèis Rois

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

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

Ghabhadh leisgeul às leth Mhgr S MhicIlleBhrath.

2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

Cha robh Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt no Aithrisean Follaiseachd sam bith ann.

3. Cumhachdan Fosaidh

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** nach robh feum air na cumhachdan fosaidh a chaidh a bhuileachadh aig a' choinneimh air 27 Ògmhios 2024 a thaobh cleachdadh airson Comataidh na Gàidhlig.

4. Naidheachdan Matha

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dha na naidheachdan matha a chaidh a thaisbeanadh.

5. Fèis Rois – Taisbeanadh

Thug Fiona Dalgetty, Àrd-Oifigear Fèis Rois, seachad taisbeanadh.

Thug a' Bh-uas Dalgetty seachad foir-shealladh agus cùl-fhiosrachadh mun bhuidhinn, a' gabhail a-steach com-pàirteachasan, maoinachadh agus cothroman a bhathar a' tabhann do chloinn is dhaoine òga.

Rè na deasbaireachd, rinn Buill moladh air obair na buidhne agus bha iad toilichte cluinntinn gun robh Fèis Rois fhathast a' ruigsinn sluagh eadar-nàiseanta. Mar fhreagairt do cheist mun àm ri teachd, thuirt a' Bh-uas Dalgetty gun robh i fhathast dòchasach agus thug i seachad eisimpleirean de ghnìomhan a bha iad air atharrachadh gus freagairt air an àm.

Bha a' Chomataidh ag aithneachadh gun robh fìor dheagh bhuaidh air slàinte is sunnd chloinne is dhaoine òga san sgìre agus bhathar an dòchas gun leanadh an soirbheachas san àm ri teachd.

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

6. Adhartas mu choinneimh Plana na Gàidhlig 4

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/10/24 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Thug Oifigear Poileasaidh na Gàidhlig seachad cunntas air adhartas agus dh'inns i gum biodh dàta làithreach, agus dàta a bha ri thighinn, fhathast a' stiùireadh phrìomhachasan agus cho-dhùnidhean a thaobh nam builean taobh a-staigh Plana na Gàidhlig (PnG). Dheidheadh dàta a thoirt chun na Comataidh mar a bhiodh e ri fhaotainn.

Bhon Chomataidh mu dheireadh, bhathar air dreachd agus stoidhle PnG taobh a-staigh an t-Siostaim Coileanaidh agus Rianachd Cunnairt (*Performance and Risk Management System* – PRMS) ùrachadh agus bhiodh seo a-nis air a thaisbeanadh mar leabhran brath-ullachaidh, air a dhealbhadh airson 's gum biodh am fiosrachadh nas tarraingiche agus nas fhasa fhaotainn.

Chaidh innse do Bhuill gum faodadh iad coimhead air adhartas a thaobh a' Phlana Ghàidhlig aig àm sam bith le bhith a' dol gu PRMS. Thug Buill taing dhan Oifigear

Coileanaidh Chorpóra airson stiùireadh ceum air cheum a thaisbeanadh dhan Chomataidh.

Rè na deasbaireachd, chaidh na puingeann a leanas a thogail:-

- chaidh fiosrachadh iarraidh agus fhaotainn mun choimeas eadar 2011 is 2022 a thaobh duilleag 4 dhen aithisg;
- chaidh fiosrachadh mionaideach iarraidh a thaobh a bhith a' comharrachadh làrach a dh'fhaodadh a bhith freagarrach airson campas 3–18 ann an Inbhir Nis agus chaidh dearbhadh gun deidheadh fiosrachadh mun sgrùdadh ion-roghnachd a cho-roinn às dèidh coinneamh ro-innleachdail a bha san amharc;
- chaidh fàilte a chur air taic a bhathar a' toirt do phàrantan a thaobh a bhith a' bruidhinn na Gàidhlig san dachaigh agus chaidh eisimpleir a thoirt seachad mu cho iom-fhillte 's a bha ionnsachadh dà-chànanach. Chaidh fiosrachadh iarraidh agus fhaotainn mu shuidheachaidhean san dachaigh agus an taic a dh'fhaodadh a bhith air a thoirt seachad do phàrantan gus faighinn thairis air dùbhlain sam bith; agus
- bha e cudromach campas 3–18 a chumail ann an co-theacsa le planaichean eile na Comhairle. Bha Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd a' coimhead gu sònraichte air an oighreachd sgoile a thaobh nan togalaichean agus chaidh faighneachd ciamar a bha campas 3–18 a' suidhe an lùib Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd, a thaobh an sgrùdadh ion-roghnachd agus an comas airson campas eile, Gàidhlig no eile.

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

- i. dhan aithisg; agus
- ii. gur e aithisg eadar-ghluasaid eadar am Plana Gàidhlig làithreach agus am Plana Gàidhlig ùraichte a bhiodh san ath aithisg PRMS cuideachd.

7. Cunntas às Ùr mu Fhoghlam Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/11/24 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

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

- bha a' Ghàidhealtachd air thoiseach air ùghdarrasan ionadail a thaobh na bhathar a' dèanamh gus cànan is cultar na Gàidhlig a chumail suas is a bhrosnachadh ach, a' coimhead air adhart, bha e cudromach gun robh seo air a chumail suas. Bha an aithisg a bha fa chomhair nam Ball a' sealltainn gun robhar a' dèanamh obair chruaidh sa Ghàidhealtachd;
- bha cothrom ann beachdachadh air mar a bha dàta air a chruinneachadh ann an coimhearsnachdan far an robh a' Ghàidhlig maireannach, airson fiosrachadh fhaighinn mu na rudan a dh'fhaodadh obrachadh agus a' chosgais a bha an lùib a bhith a' cumail suas adhartas;
- bha e na adhbhar misneachd a bhith a' faicinn àireamh thidsearan a' gabhail pàirt sna diofar phrògraman agus bhiodh cunntasan cunbhalach mu adhartas leis a sin feumail. Bha e cudromach taic a thoirt do thidsearan agus fiù 's ged nach biodh ach beagan fhaclan Gàidhlig aig Ceannard, bheireadh seo brosnachadh dha na sgoilearan a' Ghàidhlig ionnsachadh;
- bhiodh e feumail sgrùdadh leanmhainn a dhèanamh às dèidh bliadhnaichean sgoile nan sgoilearan a bha air a dhol tro Fhoghlam Gàidhlig, no a bha air a

bhith an lùib ionnsachadh Gàidhlig, gus beachd fhaighinn air na bha iad a-nis a' cur ri saoghal na Gàidhlig san fharsaingeachd;

- ann am buaidhean co-ionannachd na h-aithisg, chaidh moladh gum bu chòir ealla a ghabhail do niùro-iomadachd seach gum biodh cuid de chloinn a' cur feum air dòigh-teagaisg diofraichte a thaobh a bhith ag ionnsachadh cànan; agus
- bha Oideas, prògram a bha air a leasachadh le Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd agus Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, a' solarachadh phod-chraolaidhean far am faodadh proifeiseantaich a bha ag obair ann am Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig meòrachaidhean mun cuid obrach a cho-roinn. Chaidh aithneachadh gun robh seo cudromach.

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

- do na raointean leasachaidh is adhartais ann am Prìomhachas Ro-innleachdail 4.1 dhen Phlana Ghàidhlig; agus
- do na gnìomhan gus taic a chur ri Ionnsachadh Proifeiseanta nan Tidsèaran Gàidhlig a tha a' cur taic ris na Riatanasan Ro-innleachdail airson Foghlam Gàidhlig.

8. Cunntas às Ùr mun Phoileasaidh Dà-chànanach

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/12/24 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

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

- dh'fheumaiste a bhith faiceallach nuair a bhathar a' cleachdadh AI agus/no eadar-theangachadh air-loidhne. Bha teicneòlas a' dèanamh adhartas ach bha feum fhathast air mac an duine airson dèanamh cinnteach gun robhar a' cleachdadh a' cho-theacsa cheart;
- bha eisimpleirean air a bhith ann nuair nach robh cunnradairan air seirbheis eadar-theangachaidh Gàidhlig na Comhairle a chleachdadh;
- tha an dreachd Poileasaidh air Cleachdadh Shoidhnichean Traftaig Dà-chànanach, a tha Roinn nan Rathaidean is a' Bhun-structair a' leasachadh an-dràsta, a' moladh gun deidheadh soidhnichean dà-chànanach a chleachdadh airson soidhnichean rathaid ùra air fad, ach a-mhàin le ùmhlachd do shuidheachaidhean ainmichte. Bha Sgioba na Gàidhlig a' conaltradh le co-obraichean gus pròiseas measaidh, co-chomhairleachaidh is aontachaidh foirmeil is làidir a chur air dòigh airson dèiligeadh ri suidheachaidhean ainmichte a dheidheadh a mholadh. Chuidicheadh seo gus dèanamh cinnteach nach biodh e ceadaichte dealachadh on phoileasaidh dà-chànanach ach ann am fìor chorra shuidheachadh. Bha Buill dhen bheachd gum bu chòir a' Ghàidhlig a chleachdadh air soidhnichean Gàidhlig air fad agus chaidh ceist a thogail a thaobh ciamar a dh'fhaodadh soidhne dà-chànanach bacadh a chur air sàbhailteachd rathaid agus ciamar a dh'fhaodadh bun-stèidh nas motha a bhith a dhìth. Mura robh ach aon chànan gu bhith air a chleachdadh, 's e a' Ghàidhlig a bu chòir a bhith ann seach gur e sin an cànan dùthchasach; agus
- bhathar tric ag ràdh gun robh a' Ghàidhlig air soidhnichean rathaid a' cosg barrachd ach bha fianais gu leòr ann nach robh na cosgaisean ach beag.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan obair a rinneadh a thaobh a bhith ag ùrachadh poileasaidh dà-chànanach na Comhairle agus dha na h-ath cheumannan a bhathar a' moladh mus deidheadh a sgaoileadh às ùr.

9. Co-labhairt na Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/13/24 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

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

- dh'fhaodadh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig fulang bho aonaranachd agus bha e cudromach gun robh cothrom aca a' Ghàidhlig a chleachdadh;
- chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air a' bheachd gum biodh mion-chànanan is cultaran eile air an gabhail a-steach sa cho-labhairt;
- bhiodh a' cho-labhairt a' taisbeanadh na Gàidhlig ann an gnìomh agus ann an suidheachadh gnothachais; agus
- ged a bhiodh a' cho-labhairt aghaidh-ri-aghaidh, bu chòir beachdachadh air sruthadh beò no clàradh cuideachd.

Chrìochnaich a' choinneamh aig 1.45f.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 5 September 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mrs J Hendry
Mr A Baldrey (remote)	Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr R Gale	Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Mr A Graham	Mr M Reiss (remote)

Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt	
Mr K Gowans (remote)	Ms K MacLean (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr D McDonald
Ms L Johnston (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms L Kraft (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr R MacKintosh	Mrs M Reid
Mrs A MacLean (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)

In attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations
Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services
Mr A Hunter, Service Lead – Transport and Logistics
Ms G Ward, Community Benefits Manager
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager (remote)
Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent R Shepherd, Police Scotland
Ms M Kinsman, BSL Interpreter (item 11 only)

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Ms T Collier, Mr M Green, Mr R Gunn, Ms L Niven and Ms M Smith.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Communities and Place Committee.

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

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the following items of good news:-

- the Amenities Team had been shortlisted for two categories at the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards 2024. The awards ceremony would take place at the end of APSE's annual seminar on 11 and 12 September 2024. The first nomination was for Best Workforce Initiative for the Amenities Review, and the second nomination was for Best Service Team of the Year for the Parks, Grounds and Horticulture Service. Both nominations referred to the redesign of the Amenities function which had commenced in 2021 and consisted of six objectives. As a result, the entire service delivery method had been reviewed, including numbers and types of equipment, areas and routes covered, and staffing. The team then had a better understanding of their estate, more robust monitoring and an amended work programme, with increased set aside and reduced emissions. The approach taken had involved significant teamwork and consultation with staff and clients;
- the construction work for the extension at Canisbay Cemetery had been completed and was in the settlement period. This would provide an additional 500 lairs, increasing the anticipated capacity by over 100 years and allowing for the reversal of the lair purchase restrictions that were in place; and
- Daniel Ritchie had started work with the Communities and Place Service in the Customer Service Centre in June 2023, at age 16, to support the garden waste campaign for the summer, and had been retained for a year to help with various other campaigns including the recent General Election. Daniel had been keen to get into work with the aspirations of gaining an apprenticeship at 17 once he had passed his driving test. Daniel had grown into a well-developed customer service assistant who had shown more maturity than his years when providing services to members of the public. He was reliable, honest and a great ambassador for young people. He had secured a plumbing apprenticeship with the Council in the Alness Depot, having passed his driving test in the same month. Daniel would take with him a well-rounded knowledge of Council services as well as great customer care skills, and best wishes were extended to him for his bright future.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

5. Police Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Poileis

There had been circulated Report No CP/15/24 by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland.

Chief Superintendent Shepherd provided a brief overview of the report, highlighting several key points including the appointment of two new Chief Inspectors in Highland; the increasing number of traffic offences; visits to the Highlands by several high ranking Police Scotland Officers; the number of missing people; the use of significant resources to reduce violent crimes connected with County Lines activity; and the review of Police Scotland's estate.

He apologised that drink and drug driving figures were not separated in this report but confirmed they would be in future, and that the current national position was an approximately 50:50 split

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the work done to combat County Lines activity was commended, and the public were thanked for their help in providing information in that regard;
- information was sought, and provided, on the Rider Refinement programme for motorcyclists and what else was being done to help reduce motorcycle accidents; the rising rates of shoplifting; the use of the term 'acquisitive crime'; what happened to money that was confiscated following County Lines investigations; and the role of police during road accidents and closures;
- on the point being raised, the Chief Superintendent undertook to liaise with Roads Policing colleagues about the difficulty of catching speeding motor bikes as safety camera vans were usually looking towards oncoming traffic and motorbikes did not have front number plates;
- in response to concerns about road traffic accidents and fatalities it was confirmed that there was to be increased visibility from Roads Policing in the following few weeks with extra patrols on the roads which had seen the most accidents;
- in response to further queries surrounding roads, including concerns about older cyclists, and tourists in hire cars or campervans, the Chief Superintendent undertook to liaise with colleagues in Roads Policing regarding providing an online briefing for Members to address their concerns;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the public phones outside police stations ran on a system that was due to be disconnected by telecoms companies and the cost of replacing them with digital phone lines was deemed too high given the existence of the 111 service and that most members of the public had mobile phones. The Chief Superintendent undertook to come back to Members with more information on the consultation around this and the possibility of the phones being replaced following comments from Members that not everyone, particularly older people, had a mobile phone;
- in response to a question about whether digital road signs could be used to display speed limits in kilometres per hour to help tourists, it was clarified that discussion with Bear Scotland would be needed to see if this was possible;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the implementation of body worn cameras in Highland;
- in response to a question regarding visibility of officers, it was confirmed that officers now had the technology to enable them to work wherever they were

without needing to be in police stations, which would allow them to spend more time out in the community;

- information was sought, and provided, on whether the Police Station in Portree would be manned more regularly and whether there were still plans to move the station to a combined blue light building with other services; and
- concern was expressed around the future of the Police House in Dunvegan and the Chief Superintendent indicated that he would be happy to discuss this with Local Members outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** 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 to 31 March 2024.

6. Firework Control Zones Raointean Smachd Chleasan-teine

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the new discretionary power and the guidance on its use provided by the Scottish Government;
- NOTED** the current situation and approach in the Highland Council area; and
- APPROVED** the proposed process for responding to any community requests.

7. Near Final Outturn Revenue Budget Monitoring for 2023/24 and Service Performance Reporting for Q1 2024/25 Toradh Faisg air Deireannach airson Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach airson 2023/24 agus Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson R1 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- according to a report to the Corporate Resources Committee on 11 September, the Quarter 1 2024/25 spend was 33.6% of the total Communities and Place budget of approximately £41m;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the detailed Quarter 1 Revenue Budget monitoring statement would be circulated to Members of the Committee as soon as it was available;
- commentary was sought, and provided, on the issues associated with the implementation of the new corporate financial system, and Members were assured that managers were maintaining an overview of spend and there was no impact on the day-to-day operations of the service;
- in relation to the near-final outturn 2023/24, approximately half of the projected overspend of £1.962m was attributed to the Service Leadership budget, and an explanation was sought, and provided, in that regard. It was confirmed that a more detailed breakdown of the Service Leadership budget overspend would be circulated to Committee Members, including an explanation as to why the near-

final overspend had more than doubled since the Quarter 3 monitoring statement;

- staff absence in the Communities and Place Service was consistently 30% above the Council average, and an update was sought, and provided, on the action being taken to address this; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that 2023/24 data on the inspection and sampling of high risk private water supplies should now be available, and the Strategic Lead – Environmental Health and Bereavement Services undertook to circulate it to Mr R Gale.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Service's revenue monitoring position;
- scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service's performance and risk information;
- AGREED** that the Quarter 1 2024/25 Revenue Budget monitoring statement be circulated to Committee Members as soon as it was available; and
- AGREED** that a detailed breakdown of the Service Leadership budget overspend 2023/24 be circulated to Committee Members, including an explanation for the significant increase since the Quarter 3 monitoring statement.

8. **Capital Monitoring: Near Final Outturn 2023/24** **Coimhearsnachdan agus Àite – Sgrùdadh Calpa: Toradh Faisg air Deireannach 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- there was good news in the report around public conveniences, particularly the refurbishment of the facilities at Whin Park, and burial grounds, and Members welcomed burial grounds being given a higher profile at Committee in recent years;
- there had been significant slippage but it did not appear to be cause for concern;
- information was sought, and provided, in relation to the cessation of landfill in Highland and the delay in the procurement of waste shredders.

The Committee **NOTED** the near final capital outturn position for Communities and Place for 2023/24.

9. **Highland Community Benefit Policy (Procurement)** **Poileasaidh Shochairan Coimhearsnachd (Solair agus Sochairan Saor-thoileach Eile)**

There had been circulated Report No CP/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was hoped that lessons would be learned from the past when the majority of contracts had been awarded to large companies, and small and medium enterprises in remote communities in particular had been disadvantaged by the

procurement process. There were a number of examples of situations whereby the previous procurement exercise had put businesses at risk and driven down employment opportunities in remote and rural areas, and an assurance was sought, and provided, that this had been taken into consideration;

- the cheapest option was not always the best, and the importance of quality was emphasised; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that Committee and Local Members would be kept up-to-date as work progressed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the rationale for, and the work undertaken, to review the Council's approach to community benefits from procurement;
- ii. **AGREED** the draft Community Benefit from Procurement Policy set out at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the next steps and that an update on the implementation of this policy would be reported to this Committee in September 2025.

10. Sustainable Business Travel – Update on progress 2023/24 Siubhal Gnothachais Seasmhach – Cunntas às ùr mu adhartas 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CP/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in relation to the Pathfinder Project Plan and the Opportunity Headline in respect of the existing revenue-generating network of Charge Place Scotland chargers, information was sought, and provided, on what was going to be done to encourage people to use these chargers when they were currently shying away from them due to the excessive tariffs in place in Highland. The Head of Community Operations and Logistics undertook to provide a specific statement in that regard to Mr R Gale from procurement colleagues;
- as stated in the report, transitioning the fleet was going to be financially challenging. Electric or hydrogen-powered larger vehicles and Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) in particular would be significantly more expensive than existing vehicles and, given the current financial climate, there was a real risk that transitioning larger vehicles and HGVs would not be attainable in the seven-year life of the plan. It having been questioned whether the Council was acknowledging this risk, the Head of Community Operations and Logistics confirmed that she would review the wording on the Risk Register to ensure it was robust and clear;
- it was understood that the increased weight of electric vehicles meant that tyres wore out up to 40% faster. It having been queried whether this had been taken into account, it was explained that there was not a lot of evidence regarding tyre wear at present but a comparison could be carried out and brought back next year; and
- it was queried whether there were winter or all-season tyres specifically for electric vehicles.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. progress to date on reducing fleet, miles, and emissions;

- ii. progress with Pathfinder 2 and the indicative timescale for implementation in Highland;
- iii. the updates to the action plan at Appendix 1 of the report; and
- iv. the summary of Pathfinder Projects at Appendix 2 of the report.

11. Highland British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2024–2030 Plana Cànan Soidhnidh Bhreatainn 2024–2030

There had been circulated Report No CP/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the BSL Local Plan and the engagement taking place were welcomed. However, there was a long way to go to achieve full equity and inclusion;
- elderly people who were becoming hard of hearing often struggled to communicate in shops, for example, and it would be helpful for those who were having difficulty to learn basic BSL. It was confirmed that this issue would be raised with See Hear Highland Education and Learning Services;
- it was highlighted that this was the first time a BSL interpreter had attended a Committee meeting and it was only for this item;
- the work being done by the Education and Learning Service was commended. However, the majority of deaf people had left school, and it was necessary to look at equity for all;
- the work being done to improve BSL content and accessibility on the Council's website was welcomed. However, if equity was the aim it was necessary to provide all information in BSL;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that officers would look at the provision of training for Elected Members on Contact Scotland and the use of BSL interpreters; and
- it was welcomed that there would be ongoing regular meetings with the deaf community as they should be leading and driving this area of work.

The Committee **AGREED** the Highland BSL Local Plan for 2024-2030 as set out at Appendix 2 of the report.

12. Waste Management Service Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Atharrachadh dhan t-Seirbheis Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No CP/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was queried whether it was planned to provide containers for plastics, metals and cartons at recycling centres so people could dispose of their waste there if they filled their green bin before it was due to be collected;
- using a can crusher to maximise space in recycling bins was good advice, and it was confirmed that consideration would be given to including that in future communication materials;
- it was questioned how the Council could encourage people to recycle properly and encourage those who did not recycle at present to start;

- the need to provide recycling bins at the roadside and at places such as filling stations having been emphasised, the Strategic Lead – Waste Strategy and Operations, confirmed he would be happy to look at that going forward;
- Members commended the Strategic Lead – Waste Strategy and Operations and his team for the efficient rollout of the new waste and recycling collection arrangements, which had brought into focus how much waste there was and led to positive behavioural change. Particular reference was made to plastic wrapping which could not be recycled, and it was suggested finding a way to address that was the next step;
- if people understood what happened to their waste it would encourage them to embrace recycling, and the need for education on the recycling journey was reiterated;
- whilst there had been some issues with food waste bins not being collected, it was understood that was due to higher than expected participation;
- some service-users, such as vulnerable people who required full-time care, required additional bins, and it would be helpful if, going forward, there could be pre-emptive communication in that regard; and
- the introduction of communal bins for flats was welcomed, and it was good to see officers engaging with residents about what suited them best. It was added that there might be a need for gravity locks in some areas.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress that had been made on the phased introduction of Recycling Improvement Funded (RIF) collection service changes; and
- ii. the progress being made on the essential infrastructure projects that would support service change in Caithness, Skye and Lochaber.

13. Community Asset Transfer Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd

13a. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2023/24 Aithisg Bhliadhnail Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd 2023/24

Suspension of Standing Orders - the Committee **AGREED** to suspend Standing Order 34 to allow consideration of recommendation ii. of this item.

There had been circulated Report No CP/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In response to a question regarding Fort Augustus Memorial Hall, which was both a listed building and a war memorial, it was confirmed that there was no indication that the Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company wanted to change the character of the building.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the annual report on Community Asset Transfer, as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1 of the report, for submission to the Scottish Government; and
- ii. the removal of a right of pre-emption in regard to Fort Augustus Memorial Hall as detailed at section 7 of the report.

**13b. Community Asset Transfer Request – The Field
Iarrtas Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd – An t-Achadh**

There had been circulated Report No CP/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED** to the lease of the land sited at 4 River Drive, Teaninich Industrial Estate, Alness (currently known as The Field), for £1 per annum, based upon the terms of transfer as set out in the report at paragraph 8.2.

At this stage, the Chair paid tribute to Caroline Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics, who would be leaving the Council at the end of October. Caroline had worked in a range of different roles and services during her 17 years of service, and had been a great supporter of her own staff and others across the organisation in a mentoring role. On behalf of the Committee, he thanked her for her years of service and wished her all the best for the future.

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Wednesday 11 September 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr S Mackie
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Mrs K MacLean (substitute)
Mr A Christie	Mr C Munro
Ms T Collier (substitute)(Remote)	Mr P Oldham
Mr R Gale	Ms M Reid
Mr A Jarvie	Mr M Reiss
Mr S Kennedy	Mrs T Robertson
Mr B Lobban	Ms M Ross (substitute)
Mr D Louden	

Non-Members also present:

Mr C Ballance (Remote)
Mr J Grafton
Mr T Maclennan (Remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mrs S Armstrong, Chief Officer - Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr S Fraser, Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance
Mr B Porter, Chief Officer - Corporate Finance
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer - Business Solutions
Mr P Nevin, Interim ECO - Performance and Governance
Ms E Barrie, Head of HR
Mr C Donaldson, Principal Programme Manager
Ms M Mackenzie, Strategic Commercial Manager
Mr D Mackenzie, Trading Standards Manager
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms O Bayon, Committee Officer

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

Mr D Louden in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr G Mackenzie and Mrs M Paterson.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Declaration of Interest:

Item 5: Mr J Grafton

Transparency Statements:

Items 7.c, 8, 15 and 16.iii – Mr A Christie
Item 12 – Mr A Christie and Mr S Mackie

3. Recess Powers**Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 have not been exercised in relation to the business of the Corporate Resources Committee.

4. Good News**Naidheachdan Matha**

As part of the latest phase of the restructuring of the Senior Leadership team, the Chair confirmed the recent appointment of four Chief Officers in respect of the Corporate Service cluster. He took the opportunity to congratulate and wish them every success in their new roles as undernoted:

- Sheila Armstrong - Chief Officer Revenues & Commercialisation
- Stewart Fraser - Chief Officer Legal & Corporate Governance
- Brian Porter - Chief Officer Corporate Finance
- Jon Shepherd - Chief Officer Business Solutions

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

5. Late Submission of Expenses Claims**A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch**

Declarations of Interest – Mr J Grafton made a declaration of interest in this item as a claimant and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

It had previously been agreed by the Corporate Resources Committee that late submissions of Elected Members expenses claims would be presented to the Committee for approval.

Concern was expressed at the delay by Members in submitting expense claims, particularly given that some of these claims related to the previous financial year. In this regard it was stressed that Members must submit any financial claims timeously and within the 3-month period in accordance with the Council's policy.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:

- Mr John Grafton - £702.15 for mileage in October, November and December 2023;
- Mr Karl Rosie - £1,575.90 for mileage in April, October, November and December 2023;
- Mrs Margaret Paterson - £164.52 for broadband expenses from April to December 2023; and
- Mrs Barbara Jarvie - £132.30 for mileage in January and February 2024.

**6. Corporate Revenue Budget Update – Financial Year 2024/25
Cunntas às Ùr mun Bhuidseat Teachd-a-steach Chorpóra – Bliadhna
Ionmhasail 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No RES/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the factors impacting on the profile of spend for the quarter against annual budget;
- the Council's Financial System would deliver a range of improvements and efficiencies and officers be thanked for the work involved. It was important Members exercised patience in relation to this transformational work;
- in response to a query, it was explained the Scottish Government had confirmed additional revenue funding and flexibility for the Council to repurpose its capital funding to support the offer made to the SJC pay group;
- highlighting that the latest forecasted outturn for the Income Generation Portfolio showed it was 99.6% on target and commending the work of officers in this regard;
- highlighting the success of the Storr Centre and the opportunity to replicate this model at other locations in Highland to augment visitor experiences;
- concerns in relation to some of the feedback and income generated by the Campervan & Motorhome Scheme and the potential for the Scheme to be reviewed;
- the challenges of the irresponsible behaviour the above Scheme sought to address as part of the overall approach to delivering sustainable tourism and actions to be taken in response be clearly specified and consideration given to potential gains such as provision for campervans/motorhomes on Council owned land adjacent to tourist routes. In addition, the potential for the ranger/traffic warden service to undertake enforcement be considered;
- the Campervan & Motorhome Scheme would be developed going forward with any new ideas being considered to ensure visitors enjoyed their experience but did not adversely affect the places they visited. The Scheme could be reviewed in due course if not considered to be working as intended;
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided in relation to slippage on income targets for Solar PV Council estate and battery storage. If required, a more detailed briefing could be provided outwith the meeting;
- an update was sought and provided on the position with Feed-in Tariff claims and treatment of any back payments received in terms of savings. It was confirmed a response would be provided directly to Mr C Ballance;
- the potential for Annex 2 of the report to be improved by including information on where savings forecasts under/over target would be carried forward to future years;
- in relation to Adult Social Care, clarification was sought and provided that the Council had agreed to set aside reserves to support Council and NHS Highland change and transformation and savings. Future reports to the relevant strategic committee would provide more detailed information on this matter;

- in response to a query, confirmation that more detailed information on DSM/digital school savings would be provided to Mr A Christie outwith the meeting; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that more detailed information would be circulated to Members in relation hybrid working and Family First savings.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. budget update as set out in the report;
- ii. forecast provided regarding budget savings;
- iii. update provided regarding the Income Generation portfolio.; and
- iv. that further information would be circulated on the hybrid working and Family First savings.

7. Corporate Services Cluster: Revenue Monitoring Near Final Outturns 2023/24

Bagaid Sheirbheisean Corporra: Toraidhean Faisg air Deireannach Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach 2023/24

a. Depute Chief Executive Service Revenue Monitoring Near Final Out-turn 2023/24

Toradh Faisg air Deireannach Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis an Iar-Cheannaird 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No RES/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the revenue monitoring position for the Service.

b. Performance & Governance Service Revenue Monitoring Near Final Out-turn 2023/24

Toradh Faisg air Deireannach Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis Coileanaidh & Riaghlachais 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No RES/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the revenue monitoring position for the Service.

c. Resources & Finance Service Revenue Monitoring Near Final Out-turn 2023/24

Toradh Faisg air Deireannach Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis Ghoireasan & Ionmhais 2023/24

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau. 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 RES/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the revenue monitoring position for the Service.

**8. Corporate Services Cluster – Performance Monitoring Q1 2024/25
Bagaid Sheirbheisean Corporra – Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh R1 2024/25**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland and Inverness Business Improvement District, and as General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau. 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 RES/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it would be useful for median targets also to be set for the number of working days per employee lost through sickness absence on the basis that long term absences involving a small number of staff could skew the figures and this would provide for a more realistic target;
- in addition to the above, a more detailed breakdown be provided in future reports in relation to sickness absence including length of absences. It was confirmed further consideration would be given to the potential to improve the information presented on sickness absence;
- further information was sought and provided on the training provided to managers on absence management and to improve the recording of absence data;
- the target to achieve a RAG status of green in relation to the issuing of committee papers on time should be over 90%;
- the improvement in performance in relation to the issuing of Committee papers on time be welcomed;
- in relation to freedom of information requests, confirmation was sought that there was an ongoing process to ensure as much information as possible was published on the Council's website for the benefit of the public and officers; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on the overview taken on the contributory factors in relation to mental health conditions accounting for the largest increase in FTE days lost in 2023/24, the feedback provided to services and monitoring through staff partnership meetings with trade union colleagues.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the performance of the Services.

**9. Treasury Management
Rianachd Ionmhais**

**a. Annual Treasury Management Report – 2023/24
Aithisg Stiùiridh Bhliadhnail an Ionmhais – 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No RES/24/24 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- concern at the increase in external debt and loan charges in 2023/24. It was critical borrowing was responsible and prudent and in delivering the Highland Investment Plan a capital repayment programme was in place to ensure future generations were not left with a legacy of debt;
- the Highland Investment Plan would deliver a legacy for future generations in terms of new schools and improvements to roads repairs, harbours and other infrastructure and this could not be achieved without borrowing. The key issue was that the debt burden of the Council had to be affordable and the Highland Investment Plan allowed this to be the case; and
- an assurance was sought and provided that the Council's treasury activity complied with all relevant regulations and codes of practice. This included the Prudential Code of Practice that required capital programmes and borrowing plans to be affordable, prudent, and sustainable.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Annual Treasury Management report for 2023/24.

b. Summary of Transactions Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No RES/25/24 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024.

10. Corporate Systems Update – Finance, HR/Payroll and Pensions Programme Cunntas às Ùr mu Shiostaman Corporra – Ionmhas, Goireasan Daonna/Rola-ràighidh agus Prògram Pheinnseanan

There had been circulated Report No RES/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Chair advised that the Programme would deliver better quality, accurate and more timely information and benefit the Council as a whole and he thanked the Team for the significant amount of work involved.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the efficiencies that would be delivered by updating the business systems that continued to use legacy ledger and supplier codes to use the new codes; and
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on the progress being made towards achieving a cost-effective solution for storing historical financial data.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. updates regarding the Finance, HR/Payroll and Pensions Programme;
- ii. review of governance arrangements and revisions to the Programme Board and respective Project Boards;
- iii. update regarding the Human Resources and Payroll project, including the commissioning of an external strategic review to support future strategy and decision making.

**11. Annual Procurement Report 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024
Aithisg Bhladhnaid Solair 1 Giblean 2023 – 31 Màrt 2024**

There had been circulated Report No RES/27/24 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought on approved exemptions to the usual procurement process, noting this could be as a result of there being only one supplier, or only one interested party. It was requested that a report providing further information on approved exemptions be submitted to a future meeting;
- the community wealth building approach was welcomed;
- clarification was sought and provided on the ‘animal and farming’ categorisation, which was outwith the control of the Council, but which could relate to services not directly connected to animals or farming such as elements of road salt;
- information was sought and provided on plans to develop a ‘meet the buyer’ type event in 2025. Reference was also made to the development of a corporate procurement framework to deliver the Highland Investment Programme, which would involve supplier events, prior to the matter being taken to full Council;
- the increased involvement of Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) with the Council was welcomed, including streamlined processes and training to facilitate this. It was queried whether the reported increase of nine SMEs to 32 was significant, and a summary was provided of the Scotland Excel Framework, which was a relatively small percentage of the Council’s overall spend;
- in response to dismay that many business head offices were in Inverness, and that more should be done to encourage head offices in other locations in the Highlands, it was pointed out that the list in question was not all Highland Council suppliers, only those that had signed up to the Scotland Excel Framework;
- clarification was sought and provided on the level of financial efficiencies being sought in 2024-25; and
- information was sought on how Procurement captured data on community benefit accumulation resulting from development, for example the Uig harbour redevelopment on Skye. It was explained that a system to achieve this was being worked on, as this was currently being undertaken manually on a contract by contract basis.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the content and publication of the Highland Council Annual Procurement Report 2023-2024 (Appendix 1) and **AGREED** a report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee on approved exemptions to the usual procurement processes.

12. Annual Report on Citizens Advice Bureau Contract
Aithisg Bhliadhnaid mu Chùmhnant Biùro Comhairleachadh a' Phobail

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland and General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Mr S Mackie as a Non-executive Director of Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau . However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No RES/28/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the work of staff in the Welfare team and at the Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) were thanked, and attention was drawn to the value of their work, especially during winter and challenging financial times. It was important these services were protected in future budgets;
- information was sought and provided on how the Nairn CAB fitted into the Highland contract and reporting structure, as well as some of the reported Universal Credit statistics;
- it was queried whether there was sufficient capacity to cope with increased demand and, while there was capacity to deal with the usual amount of additional services required during winter months, further demand would have to be monitored and reported as required;
- it was pointed out that over 10% of the Highland population had received support;
- attention was drawn to the increase in Universal Credit claimants since 2022, and information as provided on the Department for Work and Pensions policies in this regard;
- the importance of early intervention and prevention to avoid people experiencing trauma was highlighted, and assurance was sought and provided that trauma-informed practices were being developed and used; and
- assurance was provided that monthly meetings were undertaken between the Welfare team and CAB to avoid duplication and improve partnership working. Pathways to services were monitored and reviewed. The uniqueness of the partnership, which was a UK wide exemplar of joint working, was highlighted.

The Committee **NOTED** the undernoted performance:

- i. nearly 26,500 residents were supported by the Council's Welfare Support Team and Citizens Advice during 2023/24 with welfare, debt and housing advice services, resulting in more than 111,300 contacts (on average, 4 contacts per client). Assessing the number of contacts provided workload and throughput data and provided important context when reflecting upon the overall effectiveness and quality of welfare services being provided;
- ii. financial gains for clients exceeded £26.8 million. This represented a £17.32 return for every £1 allocated to these welfare services;

- iii. a total of £9.562m of debt (including £1.132m relating to mortgage/other secured loans) was presented by households seeking support to prioritise their bills, reduce and manage their debts, and wherever possible to lower the interest charges they were due to pay; and
- iv. support was provided for 3,132 clients (including social rented, private rented and homeowners) seeking housing-related advice, thus highlighting the demand for consistent accessible support on these critical issues.

13. Publication of Decisions at COSLA Leaders' Meetings
Foillseachadh Cho-dhùnaidhean aig Coinneamhan Ceannardan COSLA

There had been circulated Report No RES/29/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

14. Employee Engagement Strategy
Ro-innleachd Com-pàirteachadh Luchd-obrach

There had been circulated Report No RES/30/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was highlighted that, although the key objectives of the strategy aligned with trauma informed practice, there was no specific mention of it, and a summary was provided of the intention to embed trauma informed practice into the strategy;
- clarification was sought and provided on the statement that improved income might aid staff to remain or relocate to rural areas, and the importance of keeping or increasing all staff in rural areas was emphasised, with reference being made that increasing opportunities for promoted posts might assist staff to remain in the remoter areas;
- it was suggested that the statement that there was no impact on equalities only referred to negative impacts;
- the importance of including neurodiversity of all types in the strategy was emphasised, with particular reference to adult autism;
- it was queried how the staff who did not engage with the staff forum could be reached, and how to engage with 'silent' staff members; and
- information was sought and provided on pulse surveys.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Employee Engagement Strategy; and
- ii. **NOTED** consultation would take place with Trade Union colleagues on implementation of the strategy.

**15. Trading Standards Performance 2023/24 and Operational Plan 2024/25
Coileanadh Inbhean Malairt 2023/24 agus Plana Obrachail 2024/25**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland and General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau. 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 RES/31/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the Trading Standards team was thanked for their work, and reference was made to the breadth of the issues they covered, and their responsiveness to community needs. Attention was drawn to the team's standing in the Scottish and UK sector, with reference to the recent Chartered Trading Standards Institute Scottish Branch Conference;
- it was suggested that the name 'Trading Standards' was not sufficiently informative, and did not indicate the protective nature of the work;
- particular gratitude was expressed for the recent enforcement work undertaken against a shop that had been selling vapes to underage people;
- further information was sought and provided on work undertaken on children and nurseries unfair contract terms, and why this was still ongoing; and
- information was sought and provided on the notification process and timescales for reporting issues, with individuals directed to a national helpline, and businesses able to email directly for an initial response within 24 hours.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the performance of the Trading Standards team during the year 2023/24 as laid out in its Annual Report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Trading Standards Operational Plan for 2024/25.

**16. Minutes of Meetings
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of item 16.iii in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The following Minutes of Meetings were circulated and:

- i. **NOTED** - Appeals & Disputes Committee held on 31 May 2024;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee held on 12 June 2024;
- iii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum held on 19 June and 21 August 2024;
- iv. **NOTED** – Non -Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 23 August 2024; and

v. **NOTED** – Employment Release Sub Committee held on 27 August 2024.

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

The Committee **AGREED** that there was not a requirement to exclude the public.

18. Debt Management
Stiùireadh Fhiachan

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **AGREED** that this item be deferred to the next meeting.

The meeting was closed at 1.18pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 12 September 2024 at 10.35 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Ms L Kraft
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms M MacCallum (remote)
Ms L Dundas (substitute)	Mr D Macpherson
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr R Gale	Mrs M Reid (substitute)
Mr J Grafton	Ms M Ross
Mr D Gregg	Mrs L Saggars (substitute)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr R Stewart (substitute)

Religious Representatives (non-voting):

Rev C Caley
Ms S Lamont

Youth Convener (non-voting):

Ms L McKittrick

Non-Members also present:

Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr D McDonald (remote)
Mr K Gowans (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr P Logue	Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mr T MacLennan (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
Ms F Grant, Chief Officer – Secondary Education
Ms C Macklin, Head of Education, Lifelong Learning and Gaelic Services
Ms A MacPherson, Head of Resources
Ms H Brown, Senior Manager Early Years
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South)
Ms M Garson, Senior Lead, Employability and Skills 3-18
Ms B Cairns, Principal Educational Psychologist
Ms L Walker, Education Support Officer
Mr M Jones, Collaborative Lead Officer
Ms K Clark, Collaborative Lead Officer
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer
Mr S Callander, Head Teacher, Drakies Primary School
Mr D Mackenzie, Depute Head Teacher, Drakies Primary School
Ms M Neil, Depute Head Teacher, Inverness Royal Academy
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
Ms M Chemonges, Highland Parent Council Partnership (remote)
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland
Pupils from Drakies Primary School and Inverness Royal Academy

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

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed the new Youth Convener, Lauren McKittrick, and Rev Clare Caley, religious representative, to their first meeting of the Education Committee, explaining that Ms McKittrick would be observing today but would have the opportunity to outline her priorities at the November meeting of the Committee.

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell, Ms H Crawford, Mrs I MacKenzie and Mr W Skene.

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

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

Item 8: Mr R Stewart

Mr J Grafton made a general Transparency Statement on the basis that his partner was a teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

**3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Education Committee.

**4. Good News/Outstanding Achievements
Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

A presentation on outstanding achievements by pupils and schools was shown, followed by a video on Rights Respecting Schools.

Thereafter, the Chair welcomed staff and pupils from Drakies Primary School and Inverness Royal Academy who gave presentations on their journeys to achieving Gold Accreditation as Rights Respecting Schools.

The Chair drew attention to another achievement in that this week marked the 40th anniversary of Sutherland Schools Pipe Band. There would be a mass band parade and an evening with the Rogart Ceilidh Band on Saturday 21 September to celebrate this landmark.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to staff and pupils for the presentations, which showed the quality of education, and the confidence of young people, in Highland schools;
- respecting the rights of children, inclusivity, and providing a safe environment that was conducive to learning were of utmost importance;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Rights Respecting Schools was rolled out across Highland. As of June 2024, there were 174 schools engaged in the programme at various stages, details of which were provided;
- Drakies Primary School and Inverness Royal Academy consistently received praise from parents, and Members expressed pride to be representing schools doing such good work; and
- the amount of work and determination involved in the journey to achieving Gold accreditation were recognised, and congratulations were extended to both schools.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentations.

5. High Life Highland Service Delivery Contract Review Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-sgrùdadh Cùmhnant Libhrigidh High Life na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No EDU/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair explained that it was anticipated that the full Service Delivery Contract Review would be concluded in time for reporting to the November meeting of the Education Committee.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the proposal was to transfer Adult Learning and Youth Work back to the Council and it was hoped that, in time, Youth Work would align with the school curriculum. Furthermore, it was questioned if the associated budgets would be allocated to schools. In response, it was hoped this alignment would eventually take place but at present it was a matter of consolidating the service. Consequently, meantime, there would be no radical changes proposed. It also had to be borne in mind that Youth Work engaged with young people outwith the formal educational setting;
- it was questioned why the Integrated Impact Assessment had concluded that there was no impact on children and young people when the entire service was being transferred. In response, it was confirmed that the screening that had been carried out could be shared with Members, and explained that, at present, the status quo was to be maintained but that eventually the transfer would have a positive impact;
- reference was made to the valuable and innovative work undertaken in remote and rural areas by Youth Work staff, and it was hoped this would not be lost; and
- further information was sought, and provided, on the short-term resource implications referred to in section 3.1 of the report.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. progress made on the contract review and that there would be a final report for Member consideration at the 21 November 2024 meeting of the Education Committee;
- ii. the need to adjust the Service Delivery Contract scope following the Council's introduction of the operational Delivery Plan and Highland Investment Plan;
- iii. following the review of Public Service Obligations it was proposed that High Life Highland should continue to deliver all but two of the services currently delivered on behalf of the Council;
- iv. it was considered that the transfer of adult learning and youth work services to the Council would support the Council's plans for education, employability, poverty reduction and community planning;
- v. no additional Council services had been identified as suitable for transfer to High Life Highland during the contract review;
- vi. the report to the Education Committee on 21 November 2024 would focus on the actions listed in section 7 of the report; and
- vii. the High Life Highland Board was consulted on this report, in draft, at its meeting held on 28 August 2024 and feedback from the Board was reflected in the report;

and **AGREED**:-

- i. the revised scope at section 8 of the report;
- ii. that matters relating to services delivered from assets owned by the Council and operated by High Life Highland be considered as part of the Reconfiguration of Council Assets Portfolio in the Operational Delivery Plan and also the Highland Investment Plan;
- iii. the commencement of the transfer process of adult learning and youth work from High Life Highland to the Council; and
- iv. that High Life Highland should continue to deliver the remaining Public Services Obligations that it operates on behalf of the Council.

6. Gaelic Education Foghlam Gàidhlig

There had been circulated Report No EDU/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair commented that, whilst much of what happened in Gaelic education had, of late, been reported to the Gaelic Committee, it was still hugely important that the strategic Education Committee was the main forum for discussing and reporting on Gaelic education from 3-18.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- several Members having emphasised the importance of Gaelic education updates being reported to the Education Committee, it was proposed that a report on Gaelic education be brought to the Committee on at least an annual basis, if not more regularly, and this was agreed;

- it was important to understand that Gaelic education and English education were not separate services;
- the advantages of bilingual education were emphasised;
- the growth of Gaelic education was welcomed, and it was highlighted that, in the previous year, more children in Skye had been being taught through the medium of Gaelic than the medium of English;
- it was important for people to have an opportunity to use Gaelic outside of school as it was not just an academic subject but part of people's lives and culture;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that the Gaelic team could find ways of celebrating Gaelic as part of European Language Day on 26 September and International Mother Language Day on 21 February;
- it was important to understand why so few pupils were continuing their Gaelic education to Higher level;
- the importance of Gaelic being embedded across all services was emphasised;
- information was sought, and provided, in relation to the Gaelic Specific Grant from the Scottish Government;
- the provision of adult courses was welcomed although the difficulty in finding tutors to run these courses in Lochaber was highlighted; and
- further to comments on the importance of promoting the use of Gaelic in the wider community, the Chief Executive, Care and Learning Alliance, spoke to the parent and toddler groups where parents as well as children were involved in learning Gaelic.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the growth in Gaelic education pupil numbers across Highland;
- NOTED** the challenges that increased demand for Gaelic education had created in some areas for the lifespan of the fourth iteration of the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan;
- NOTED** the two strategic priorities agreed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig for Gaelic Education in the approved statutory Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan; and
- AGREED** that a report on Gaelic education be brought to the Committee on at least an annual basis, if not more regularly.

7. Revenue Budget Monitoring Final Outturn 2023/24 Fior Thoradh Deireannach Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No EDU/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed regarding the widening gap between the highest and lowest attaining 20% of schools leavers, which was not because the highest attaining had improved but because performance had decreased in both indicators. It was clear that the current system was failing both high achievers and those who needed the most support. In responding to the points raised, it was explained that closing the attainment gap was a challenge nationally. It was an area of focus and officers would be working with schools in the current session to identify what more could be done;

- in relation to literacy and numeracy in P1, P4 and P7, whilst progress had been made it was not enough, and it was necessary to do more to ensure children were getting the foundational skills they needed to succeed;
- budget savings had been achieved by staff cuts in areas such as Additional Support for Learning, which was crucial in terms of supporting pupils at the lower end of the attainment spectrum, and such cuts undermined any hope of closing the gap between the lowest and highest attaining pupils;
- information was sought, and provided, on a number of points including the increasing rates of staff absence amongst both teaching and non-teaching staff; the RAG ratings in respect of school attendance rates; the measures that had not been RAG rated; and why school attendance rates, the aforementioned reduction in Complementary Tariff Scores in respect of the highest and lowest attaining 20% of school leavers, the reduction in respect of SCQF Level 5 and Level 6 attainment by children from deprived backgrounds, and the reduction in the percentage of pupils leaving school with one Level 5 or Level 6 SQA qualification had not been highlighted as areas of slippage. In relation to attainment in particular, it was explained that it was intended to bring a full report to the November Committee, following publication of the national figures and Insight data, to provide a complete picture of how Highland was performing against both its family group and the national position, and what it was intended to do where improvement was needed;
- in relation to the percentage of the Highland population with a High Life Highland card, it was questioned why the RAG rating was now Green when the same percentage had previously been ragged as Red;
- whilst school was about more than attainment, qualifications were important for achievement later in life, and were looked for by colleges, universities and employers;
- it was important to remember that young people were at the centre of what the Council was trying to deliver, and it was necessary to be cautious about comparing results;
- there was significant variation in attainment rates across Scotland, and it was necessary to take a holistic approach encompassing employment and further education;
- it was important to focus on addressing the inequalities that existed in Highland as they contributed to the attainment challenges;
- putting young people forward for certain exams in certain groups meant that the results did not necessarily provide the whole picture;
- Highland was a large authority with unique challenges and, going forward, it was necessary to work together to support young people and educationalists; and
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that the performance information in section 9.1 of the report was for academic year 2022/23, not 2023/24 as stated.

Following summing up, Mr R Stewart, seconded by Mrs L Saggars, **MOVED**, as an addition to the recommendations in the report, that the Committee agree to bring forward an action plan aimed at addressing both the shortfall in primary literacy and numeracy at P1, P4, and P7 levels, as well as strategies to close the attainment gap. This plan should prioritise investment in staffing, particularly in areas supporting lower-attaining pupils.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr D Millar, moved that the action plan proposed by Mr R Stewart was not needed as the work was currently taking place.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 3 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes, with 1 abstention. The **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the Motion:

Mr D Gregg, Mrs L Sagers, Mr R Stewart.

For the Amendment:

Ms S Atkin, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms L Dundas, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr R Gale, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Kraft, Ms M MacCallum, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Millar, Mrs M Reid, Ms M Ross.

Abstentions:

Mr J Grafton

Decision

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Service's revenue monitoring position;
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** Service performance and risk information; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the action plan proposed by Mr R Stewart was not needed as the work was currently taking place.

**8. Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan 2024-2027
Cunntas air Plana Ionnsachadh is Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd 2024–2027**

Transparency Statement: Mr R Stewart declared a connection to this item as a Board Member of Youth Highland but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- some of the statistics around suicide and low economic activity were alarming;
- it was encouraging to see a strategy that involved everyone working together;
- the number of young people progressing to further or higher education was low but was not necessarily a cause for concern as many young people were choosing to start working instead;
- information was sought, and provided, on the funding available for community and third sector organisations working in CLD;
- the prioritisation of wellbeing and training was welcomed;
- it was queried what could be done to help tackle the lack of gender and cultural diversity in some sectors as there were several industries in Highland that had a predominantly male workforce, and it was important for the wellbeing of young people to be in a working environment where diversity was visible and they didn't feel the need to fit into a dominating culture. Particular reference was made to the misogynistic views spread by influencers such as Andrew Tate and the harmful effects that these could have on young men;

- as digital inclusion was stated as a priority within the plan, it was queried what work was being done to identify and support people who had problems accessing the internet; and
- the CLD work done in the Seaboard Villages area was commended and the importance of funding such work in rural communities was emphasised.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report; and
- APPROVED** the Community Learning and Development Plan (Appendix 2 of the report).

9. Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework Frèam Ionnsachaidh, Teagaisg is Measaidh

There had been circulated Report No EDU/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair explained that the report, in many ways, consolidated and moved forward many of the queries Members had raised at recent Education Committee meetings. It outlined the refreshed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework for Highland which had been drawn up in consultation with key stakeholders and schools, and liaison with other authorities and Education Scotland, and which was supported by ongoing engagement with The Northern Alliance to develop a toolkit that would further support practitioners across all sectors.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the holistic framework, which fed into the following item on GIRFEC, was welcomed, and Members looked forward to it being implemented;
- the phrase “lower attainment” was subjective and indicated a hierarchical judgement of young people. However, other Members commented that benchmarking was fundamental to performance monitoring and seeking continuous improvement;
- in relation to Organiser 2, the reference to effective questioning was welcomed as this empowered children;
- in relation to the Integrated Impact Assessment, thanks were expressed regarding the positive impact on children and young people;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the monitoring of children who were being educated at home;
- whilst there was little in the framework than anyone could disagree with, it was common sense to most qualified teachers and it was suggested that, rather than putting more policies in place, it was necessary to look at what practical action could be taken to overhaul education, support teaching staff and young learners, and improve attainment. It was further suggested that more manuals/technical handbooks were needed to facilitate teaching. In responding to the points raised, the Chair emphasised that the most important thing in terms of improving education was not textbooks but the quality of learning and teaching. The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework was an important document that supported practitioners and schools and provided consistency across the board;
- it was emphasised that all education systems needed a framework;

- there might be challenges in terms of achieving a balance between teacher autonomy and consistent implementation of evidenced approaches, and that was a matter for the Collaborative Lead officers;
- all Members ultimately wanted the same thing which was to improve attainment in Highland;
- whilst much of what was in the framework was very basic, such as a plenaries at the end of lessons, most jobs were about doing the basics well consistently, and it was welcomed that the elements in the framework would be understandable to the public;
- there were already a number of policies and frameworks in place relating to education, and information was sought, and provided, on how the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework would be monitored going forward to ensure it was being implemented consistently and identify any schools where improvements were needed;
- the framework represented the practical action called for by some Members, and addressed the need for consistency in assessment;
- the key word was “framework”; it was not prescriptive; and
- the use of negative language was toxic and not conducive to good learning.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the expectations placed on all practitioners to ensure high quality learning, teaching and assessment;
- NOTED** that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework would provide guidance and support for individual schools in developing learning, teaching and assessment approaches to best meet the needs of their school communities;
- APPROVED** the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework (Appendix 1 of the report); and
- NOTED** the ongoing partnership through the Northern Alliance to develop further resources for school practitioners in learning, teaching and assessment.

10. Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) Update Cunntas air Ga Fhaighinn Ceart airson Gach Leanabh

There had been circulated Report No EDU/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair explained that the report outlined the refreshed national GIRFEC guidance and how it would influence the Highland approach which was set out in section 2.1 of the report. He also welcomed the key changes to the national practice model outlined in section 7.1 of the report.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the introduction of GIRFEC had revolutionised the way schools worked with children;
- it was important to recognise that this was not an educational process but a holistic approach across different services;
- the Child’s Plan process had become a paperwork exercise that needed to be reviewed;
- the importance of continuing to have a named person as a single point of contact for families was emphasised;

- information was sought, and provided, on the GIRFEC and Child Protection training that was available to Members;
- the practice around GIRFEC had become inconsistent and it was important that it was updated;
- an update was requested on the Neuro Developmental Assessment Service (NDAS) as, although improvements were being made, waiting lists were still growing. In response, the Chair clarified that the NDAS service was delivered by NHS Highland and the best way to ensure the Committee was updated would have to be investigated;
- this was a subject that sat between the Education Committee and the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee which meant that it sometimes did not receive the scrutiny needed;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that there would be no additional costs associated with the updated GIRFEC training as this would form part of the regular training provided by the Educational Psychology Service;
- on the point being raised that a number of schools within Highland, including Dunvegan Primary School, had issues with mould, asbestos and rodents, which was affecting pupils learning experience, the Chair confirmed that a new Dunvegan Primary School was included in the Council's Capital Programme;
- it was queried whether the new Child's Plan would be designed in a digitally-friendly way to make it easier for staff to use and improve efficiency;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that there were not currently long waiting lists for pupils to be assessed by an Educational Psychologist;
- in response to a request for information about placing requests, it was explained that this could not be provided for data protection reasons; and
- information was sought, and provided, on how teachers were trained for leadership positions in 3-18 campuses.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the refreshed national GIRFEC guidance;
- NOTED** that revised guidance would be published for Highland in the coming weeks;
- NOTED** that training on expected practice in assessing, planning for and supporting children and young people would be arranged locally; and
- AGREED** that the best way to ensure the Committee was updated on NDAS be investigated.

**11. Statutory Consultation: Final Report into Gaelic Medium Catchment Consultation – Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall and Nairn
Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail: Aithisg Dheireannach mu Cho-chomhairleachadh Sgìre-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig – Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Inbhir Pheofharain agus Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the report, the Education Officer drew Members' attention to a late representation that referred to one property on the boundary of the catchment areas for Millbank Primary and Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis and advised that it would not be an issue to include this property within the catchment area of Millbank Primary.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was important to formalise catchment areas to provide clarity to schools and parents; and
- thanks were extended to Mr I Jackson, Education Officer for the work done to establish Gaelic catchment areas.

* Having considered the proposal set out within the Consultation Report and associated appendices, the representations received and the report from Education Scotland, the Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the creation of Gaelic Medium catchment areas for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall Primary School, Millbank Primary School, Inverness Royal Academy, Dingwall Academy, and Nairn Academy, on the basis set out at paragraph 1.2 of the report.

12. Statutory Consultation Exercise – Request to Proceed to Consultation on replacing the School Nurseries at Caol Primary and St. Columba’s Roman Catholic Primary with a new setting serving both schools
Eacarsaich Co-chomhairleachaidh Reachdail – Iarrtas a Dhol air Adhart gu Co-chomhairleachadh gus na Sgoiltean-àraich aig Bun-Sgoil a’ Chaoil agus Bun-Sgoil Chaitligeach Cholm Chille a Dhùnadh agus Suidheachadh Ùr a Chur nan Àite a Bhios a’ Frithealadh an Dà Sgoil

There had been circulated Report No EDU/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal Paper attached to the report (Appendix A).

13. Statutory Consultation – Establishment of a New Primary School for the Tornagrain Area
Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail – Stèidheachadh Bun-sgoil Ùir airson Sgìre Thòrr na Grèine

There had been circulated Report No EDU/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the decision to move forward with establishing a new school in Tornagrain while retaining the existing Croy Primary School was welcomed as this was what local people wanted.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the proposal set out at Appendix 2 of the report, to establish a new primary school to serve the Tornagrain housing development, with a consequential amendment to the catchment area of Croy Primary School.

14. Minutes of Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers
Geàrr-chunntas na Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail do Thidsearan

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, draft Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 5 June 2024.

The meeting concluded at 2.10 pm.