

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 18 November 2024 at 10.00 am.

### Present:

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

### In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager  
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager  
 Ms J Cromarty, Team Leader (Sustainable Transport)  
 Ms L Mateer, Principal Housing Officer  
 Ms J Johnston, Accountant  
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
 Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### Also in attendance:

Mr A McLean, Station Comander, Scottish Fire and Rescue  
 Mr McAulay, Station Comander (Cannich), Scottish Fire and Rescue  
 Mr C Donald, NatureScot

**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

### Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Dr Gregson to his first meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee.

Also, he paid tribute to former Highland Councillor Janet Home MBE who sadly passed away on 5 October 2024. Mrs Home served as a member of the former District Council from 1995 to 2007, then being elected to Highland Council. During her time as a Councillor she played an active role, serving on numerous Committees and, in 2001, she took the role of Convener of the Northern Joint Police Board and, in 2003, chaired the Licensing Board. She was deeply involved in youth work and played a major part in the construction of the Culcabok and Drakies Hall as well as serving on her local Community Council.

Other Members shared their memories of Mrs Home and condolences were expressed to her friends and family

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Cameron, Ms H Crawford, Mr K Gowans and Mr A Sinclair

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:

Declarations of Interest:-

Item 7a – Mrs J Hendry  
Item 14 - Mr D Gregg

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Items 6 and 7c – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

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

There had been circulated Report No CIA/31/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- advice was sought as to what Members could do, in association with communities and schools, when there was a pattern of deliberate fires, to ensure it could be eradicated;
- information would be useful as to the impact interlinked fire and smoke alarms was having in domestic properties;
- individuals accessing a number of Council benefits and NHS services should be signposted towards Fire Safety visits. It was also suggested officers could be trained to provide other advice, such as trip and fall hazards;
- fire officers were sometimes mobilised to assist with those who had fallen;
- it was hoped that by March/April 2025 the Cannich Crew station would be back to full strength and able to respond to call outs; and
- it would be interesting for Members to know the reasons behind accidental dwelling fires.

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

**4. Presentation - Inverness Gull Management programme-NatureScot -  
Licencing update  
Taisbeanadh – Prògram Stiùireadh Fhaoileagan Inbhir Nis – NàdarAlba –  
Cunntas às ùr mu cheadachd**

Chris Donald, NatureScot, following the request by Members of the Inverness City Area Committee held on 18 August, gave an update on the application of the licencing system undertaken under the wildlife and countryside act 1981. This would be with particular reference to Gull management within the city which had

been undertaken by Inverness BID and supported by the Inverness Common Good Fund, since 2012.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Recognising that an overall decline in gull populations was reported, Members referred to many anecdotes and concerns from local residents, schools and business owners, about a perceived increase in problems caused by gulls, particularly during 2024. These including children being unable to eat outside at school, catering businesses being unable to use their outdoor seating, cars being damaged by corrosive gull faeces and members of the public, particularly the elderly, being attacked and dive-bombed by gulls. Concrete data was required to fully understand the situation with gulls in the centre of Inverness;
- given the amount of public concern about the problems gulls were causing, a public presentation explaining the legalities around the gull situation would be beneficial;
- it was reported that the problems being faced in the city centre with gulls was spreading to the suburban areas of Inverness and preventative measures taken in one area tended to move the problems into another area;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the legal situation which was that, as soon as the birds started nesting, they were protected and a licence was required to interfere with them. Challenges around the reporting and action timescales were summarised, recognising the gestation period could be as little as 21 days, and a licence could take 28 days to be issued, by which time the chicks were hatched. Members highlighted the importance of making an area less attractive to gulls for nesting at an earlier stage;
- clarification on the diet of gulls was sought, noting that they were opportunistic in nature and would generally eat what was most readily available;
- electronic litter bins were effective;
- various hotspots for gulls around the city were highlighted by Members, although others pointed out that the whole city was affected;
- data on the extent of the gull problem in Inverness was required, with particular reference to the need to establish if the problem was increasing, and if gulls were becoming increasingly aggressive;
- it was suggested a report should be prepared on the possibility of providing Common Good Fund grants to businesses to take preventative measures against gulls nesting on their buildings;
- it was disappointing the licensing requirements had changed and had led to a perceived increase in gull problems in Inverness. The licencing process needed to be speeded up and preventative measures permitted;
- residents and visitors should be provided with more comprehensive information on how to minimise gull problems, and on the associated public health risks; and
- it was suggested NatureScot could develop an online portal for people to report gull incidents, as part of data gathering.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**5. Sustainable Transport Update - Mobility Hubs  
Cunntas às ùr mu Chòmhdhail Sheasmhach – Co-ionadan So-ghluasadachd**

There is circulated Report No CIA/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the positive anecdotes in the report were welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, on efforts undertaken to reduce vandalism to ebikes following problems in the summer and this included the installation of CCTV in certain locations and changes to the docking stations. More information would be provided to Mr Brown outwith the meeting;
- the progress at the Torvean Mobility Hub was welcomed. It was queried if solar panels had been considered for EV charging there and this information would be provided to Mr Ballance outwith the meeting. Assurance was sought, and provided, that the Hub at Torvean would not hinder visitors to the park or the operation of the popular Park Run;
- information was sought on the likely timescales for the STAG appraisal for the North Kessock and Torr Mobility Hub; and
- disappointment was expressed that the funding for the bus partnership had been paused, with reference made to the £1.4b in funding received by the Scottish Government for local projects.

The Committee **NOTED** the Sustainable Transport Update – Mobility Hubs.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024  
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

**Transparency Statements: The following declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Mr D Gregg – as a member of the Board of the Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau**

There was circulated Report No CIA/33/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- one case of anti social behaviour could have a significant detrimental impact on many other tenants. Therefore, information was requested in the next report to Committee on how many incidents of anti social behaviour led to evictions. It was advised that evictions were a last resort. The housing team worked with the Council's legal services to look at whether there were other measures that could be taken instead of eviction. A briefing on anti social behaviour and actions to address this issue would be provided at a future Ward business meeting;
- in terms of anti social behaviour cases and how the Council compared to other local authorities, information would be provided to Members. The

- housing team were more focused on this issue and it was hoped incidents would reduce going forward;
- the number of homeless presentations remained flat and this was reassuring in some ways. For example, there were not large numbers of evictions from the private sector or repossessions from mortgage lenders;
  - in relation to time spent in temporary accommodation information on whether single men under the age of 30 were spending longer in temporary accommodation was requested;
  - reassurance was sought that people who were working were not put in temporary accommodation as it was likely they would end up with rent arrears. Also, the amount of rent arrears for those in temporary accommodation should be provided. It was advised that there were people who were classed as working homeless and the team were looking at whether additional benefits for them could be applied for and options for types of accommodation that could be offered to them, such as social housing where rents were lower;
  - in terms of housing allocation, a large percentage of those allocated housing were from homeless presentations and there was a need to reassure those who were homeless at home, in overcrowded accommodation or in unsatisfactory accommodation that help was available. It was advised that the housing team were managing to assist those people in these situations and a breakdown of information on homeless presentations would be provided at a Ward business meeting;
  - the work of the housing team was commended. They were very helpful and informative and willing to go that extra mile to help people who were in very difficult situations;
  - the work by the housing team to help those in rent arrears was highlighted. This included working with Welfare Support colleagues and the Citizen's Advice Bureau;
  - contact details of the homeless prevention team would be provided to Mr D Gregg;
  - in terms of who would pay the rent if a tenant was sent to prison, this depended on whether they were remanded or convicted, whether they were on universal credit or had the means to pay their rent. The housing team worked with the Prison service on a case by case basis; and
  - information on how the Inverness South area was performing with their rent arrears would be provided to Mr D Macpherson.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April – 30 September 2024.

## **7. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

### **a) Inverness Common Good Fund, Inverness Town House – Update Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis, Taigh Baile Inbhir Nis – Cunntas às Ùr**

**Declaration of Interest – Mrs J Hendry made a Declaration of Interest in this item as a shareholder Teclan Ltd, who designed and built the new website and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.**

There had been circulated No CIA/34/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Inverness Town House project was very impressive and staff involved on it were commended for their work on the project. There were still some challenges to overcome but, in the next few years, the Town House would be in a much better place and was a great asset for Inverness and Highlands for a long time to come.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress in respect of the Feasibility Study, the cost to be met from the ICGF Townhouse Future Planning budget with updates on the progress of the study being provided to the ICGF Sub-Committee. Further, that due to the number of submissions, additional time was required to select the successful tender with completion of the feasibility study being re-scheduled to March 2025;
- ii. the progress made on the establishment of the website, extension of civic commercial use and in particular the success in letting parts of the Town House to small businesses; and
- iii. the progress of works in relation to the former Town Clerk's office and the transformation of the Town House into a multi-functional venue without detriment to its primary civic use.

**b) Financial Monitoring  
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/35/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an assurance was sought, and provided, that the Council's new financial system was operating to the degree required for the financial monitoring of the Common Good Fund;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the spend to date shown on the Town House Utilities and Cleaning budget, noting the cleaning element was carried out in-house by the Council and the costs recharged towards the end of the financial year; and
- in relation to cleaning costs, an assurance was provided that a joint procurement exercise was currently being undertaken for cleaning in respect of the Town House and Victorian Market.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 30 September 2024 and that overall expenditure is within agreed budgets excepting estimated outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

**c) Grants Applications over £10,000  
Iarrtas an Tabhartais thar £10,000**

**Transparency Statements: The following declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau**

**Mr D Gregg – as a member of the Board of the Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/36/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

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

The Committee **APPROVED** the grant application of £25,000 from Blythswood Care for the Highland Foodbank (Inverness) and that the funds be drawn from the Winter Payments budget.

## **8. Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 27 May 2024:-

### **Ward 12**

- Charleston Academy: School Tie for Incoming S1's - £480
- International Sheep Dog Society Local Committee: Scottish National Sheepdog Trail 2024 - £500
- Beaulieu Community Council: Beaulieu Primary School Garden - £200
- Kilmorack Community Council: Defib Pad Replacement - £320
- Beaulieu Community Council: Local Place Plan - £750

### **Ward 13**

- Charleston Seniors Club: Seniors Summer Trip - £702.75
- Charleston Academy: School Tie for Incoming S1's - £490
- Highland Hockey Club: Second Storage Unit - £750
- St Joseph's RC PS: Our Outdoor Learning Space - £1,302.07
- Inverness High School: Poverty Proofing Activity Day - £754
- Littering Picking - £250
- Inverness High School: Beekeeping Project - £153.88

### **Ward 14**

- Inverness High School: Poverty Proofing Activity Day - £1,506
- Dalneigh Play Park Project: Fun Day August 2024 - £750
- Friends of Merkinch Local Nature Reserve: Nature Volunteer Programme Insurance Costs - £640
- Inverness High School Beekeeping Project - £307.80
- Inverness Festival Association: Inverness Music Festival 2025 - £750
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

### **Ward 15**

- 27th Inverness Brownies: Assistance with Let Fees - £822.66
- Cable Runway Repairs: Esk Road Play Area - £300
- See Saw: Holm Play Park - £120
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

### **Ward 16**

- 7th Inverness (Crown) Camping Trip - £400
- HLH Millburn Associated Schools Active Football Groups - £2,254.35
- Community Action for Raigmore (CARE): Upgrade of Shack - £2,000
- Raigmore Primary School: P7 Residential Trip and Class Trips - £3,000

### **Ward 17**

- Balloch Primary Parent Council: Fundraising Project Reading Programme - £1,600
- Croy Community Garden Group: Polytunnel / Water Pump Installation - £420
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

### **Ward 19**

- Balloch Primary Parent Council: Fundraising Project Reading Programme - £400
- Parkour Repairs Inshes Park - £500
- Balvonie Park Association: Balvonie Community Woodland and Land Acquisition - £6,000

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

The Committee **AGREED** that the Group Leaders on the CIAC Committee discuss and appoint Members to the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee (*Consequently the following membership was determined by Group Leaders:- Mr C Ballance, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Dr M Gregson, Mrs I MacKenzie Ms K MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mr D McDonald, Mrs M Reid*).

## **10. Appointments to Outside Bodies Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean on Taobh A-muigh**

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- a) defer an appointment to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee; and
- b) to appoint Ms K MacLean to the Highland Disability Sport.

## **11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 19 August 2024 - **NOTED**;
- ii. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 15 August 2024, 26 September 2024 and 24 October 2024 - **APPROVED**; and
- iii. Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 28 October 2024 - **APPROVED**.

## **12. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill**



The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 13, 14 and 15 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**13. Town House Feasibility Study – Update**  
**Sgrùdadh Iomchaidheachd Taigh a’ Bhaile – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/37/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

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

**14. Lease Proposal for Hydrogen Development, Longman**  
**Moladh Aonta-màil airson Leasachadh Haidridein, An Longman**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr D Gregg made a Declaration of Interest in this item as a close family member was a civil servant involved in hydrogen policy and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/38/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** and **AGREED** the amended recommendations as detailed and in the report and tabled at the meeting.

**15. Inverness Common Good Account Sites and Premises Transaction Report**  
**Aithisg Gnothachais Làraich agus Togalaichean Chunntasan Maoin Math Choitcheann Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/39/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place

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

**16. Notices of Motion**  
**Brathan Gluasaid**

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance –

- (i) “Noting the significant issues in 2024 with maintenance of open spaces, parks, play areas, verges, river banks and other areas, that this Committee will consider and review the Maintenance Plan for 24/25 at its next meeting.”

Signed: Mr A Graham    Mr A Christie    Mrs T Robertson

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- as a result of the reduction in the budget for the maintenance of amenity areas agreed by the Council in March 2024, there had been issues in Inverness with the level of service. The fact staffing levels for this activity were significantly lower than previously was also highlighted;

- in particular, Council housing estates had been affected and concern that some new housing developments had not been included in the maintenance list;
- it was important that the City was smart, tidy and attractive for both residents and visitors alike and the Motion had been put forward so there was more visibility and discussion on how open space maintenance was handled going forward; and
- support was expressed for the terms of the Motion and confirmation was provided that a report would be submitted to the next meeting in February 2025.

The Committee **AGREED** the Motion.

(ii) **Additional Urgent Motion**

In line with Standing Order 8, it was advised that the Chair had agreed that the following should be considered as an urgent Motion due to the recent Post Office announcement and the public consultation proposal.

“The Committee notes with concern the announcement by the Post Office that the central Inverness Post Office on Queensgate is threatened with closure along with 115 other branches nationwide. The Committee is concerned any reduction in services available to Inverness would negatively impact city centre businesses and residents. The committee requests that the City Leader writes to the Chief Executive of the Post Office asking them to:-

1. review all possible options to keep the Inverness branch open
2. confirm the planned dates for the 6 weeks of community consultation to hear residents and business views as suggested in the Post Office Principles of Public Engagement’

Signed: Mr D Gregg    Mr I Brown

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Post Office was a service the City of Inverness needed and it was unthinkable for any city not to have a Central Post Office;
- Sub Post Offices were not in a position to provide everything a Central Post Office could. The Post office on Queengate was a well used facility by businesses and the public and for those sending sensitive documents such as banking, passports and visas and all options should be considered as to how it could be kept open including co-location with other services;
- the Post Office needed to provide the dates of the proposed consultation; and
- given there was cross-Committee support for this Motion a Press Release from all the Area Group Leaders should be issued.

The meeting ended at 1.40pm.

## City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the **Events and Festivals Working Group** held in the Leader's Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Monday, 13 January 2025 at 12.10 p.m.

### Highland Council:

Mr I Brown  
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair  
Mrs J Hendry  
Mrs K MacLean  
Dr M Gregson (non-member)  
Ms M Reid (non-member)

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager Inverness & South  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer, Corporate Service

### Also in Attendance:

Ms K Rait, Inverness Events Manager (remote)  
Ms M Laws, Inverness BID Deputy Manager (remote)

### Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair in the Chair

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated for Mr R MacKintosh.

#### 2. Exclusion of the Public

Members **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of items 5 & 6 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

#### 3. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

#### 4. Minutes of Previous Meeting

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 October 2024.

#### 5. City Area Community Events Programme 24/25

The Senior Community Development Manager for Inverness & South and the Inverness Events Manager presented an update to Members on the plans for the Community Events Programme for the period up until 31 March 2026 and beyond, including links being made with other City Centre stakeholders.

### Events and Festivals Forum

The recent Events and Festivals Forum was an informative gathering of those

involved in organising events and festivals in Inverness. A collaborative approach in terms of future Hogmanay celebrations was welcomed, and a working group would be formed prior to the end of January, to collate and agree a format. Considerations would include funding, road closures and marketing.

### **New Music Festival**

It was proposed that a new Music Festival be held in the Northern Meeting Park on Friday 15 and Saturday 16 August 2025. It was suggested that this family event would encourage both locals and visitors to the area. The proposed costs were highlighted.

It was said that this event would celebrate the major investment from the Levelling Up Fund in the Northern Meeting Park and was an exciting opportunity for something new in the Highlands.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- last year's Hogmanay celebration was cancelled due to cost and risk;
- there were other festivals to consider, such as the country music festival due to be held in the Northern Meeting Park on 6 September 2025, in addition to the expectation that the Council would put forward a budget for this year's Hogmanay celebrations;
- ticket sales, the price of tickets in comparison to other local events, and whether families might be able to afford tickets at the end of their summer holidays;
- additional visitors would be in the Highlands and this new event could appeal to them;
- the event should be marketed internationally and part of the marketing strategy would be to attract those visitors that were already in the area on holiday;
- the potential of sponsorship of the festival was welcomed and it was suggested that this was achievable; and
- a media position would need to be agreed prior to the circulation of the area committee papers and it was asked that a pre-meeting be arranged prior to the upcoming City of Inverness Area Committee.

**Overall Budget Summary** – The event budget for the Music Festival would only be confirmed subsequent to the City of Inverness Area Committee confirming a budget for Events & Festivals for 2025/26 at its meeting set for 3 February.

The Working Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support the inclusion of a summer Music Festival within the 2025/26 City Events programme, to take place at Northern Meeting Park subject to the appropriate budget being confirmed once sponsorship had been confirmed in a sum acceptable to the Working Group and subject to the City Area Committee setting a budget for Events at the Committee meeting set for 3 February.

## **6. Budget – Update – 2024/25**

Once the events programme had been confirmed, reports on programmed spend

would be taken to future meetings of the Working Group.

Members **NOTED** the information provided.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

Members **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, 20 February 2025 at 2.00 p.m.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.

## The Highland Council

### City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 20 January 2025 at 9.30 am.

#### **Present:**

Mr C Ballance

Mr M Cameron (remote)

Mr A Graham (Chair)

Dr M Gregson

Mrs I MacKenzie (remote)

Ms K MacLean

Mrs M Reid

#### **Non-Members also present:**

Mrs T Robertson (remote)

#### **In attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South

Mr S Taylor, Civic and Facilities Team Leader (remote)

Mrs H Tolmie, Administrative Assistant, Senior Community Development Manager's Office

Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer, Democratic Services

### **Mr A Graham in the Chair**

#### **Business**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

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

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements**

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

#### **3. Exclusion of the Public**

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

#### **4. Requests for Civic Hospitality 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/01/25 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South. A copy of the application had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet A.

The Sub-Committee determined the application for civic hospitality as follows:-

Organisation: Royal Navy Mine & Threat Exploitation Group  
Event: Royal Navy Mine and Threat Exploitation Group Affiliation Parade  
Venue: Inverness Town House  
Cost: £4,680.00 (Civic Buffet)  
Decision: **APPROVED**

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that applicants remained responsible for their own costs and might be held liable for the whole costs of the event if it was cancelled due to their own act or omission;
- ii. **NOTED** that the cost of civic events continued to increase beyond expected levels and that decisions might need to be taken regarding the prioritisation of events to be supported; and
- iii. **AGREED** to determine the application for civic hospitality as detailed above.

In terms of Standing Order 8, the Chair agreed to accept the following urgent additional item of business due to the necessity to book flights as soon as possible.

#### **4a. Urgent Additional Item:**

##### **Internal Application - Town Twinning trip to St Valery en Caux – WWII VE Day Commemorations**

The Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South, spoke to an application in respect of a Town Twinning trip to St Valery en Caux to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WWII VE Day Commemorations on 8 May 2025. The application had been approved, in consultation with Members of the Sub-Committee, subject to homologation at the next available Sub-Committee meeting.

Following discussion, during which Members encouraged those who had not already done so to read the poignant first-hand account of the Battle of St Valery en Caux that had been circulated with the application, the Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to grant an award of up to £7,300, to be paid from the Civic Contingency and Town Twinning budgets, towards a Town Twinning trip to St Valery en Caux to attend the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the WWII VE Day commemorations on 8 May 2025.

#### **5. Grant Monitoring and Requests for Financial Assistance 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/02/25 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South. Copies of the applications and supporting documentation had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet B.

In response to a question, it was explained that, in the event a project did not come to fruition and the grant was withdrawn, the funding went back into the general Inverness Common Good Fund, not the relevant grants budget. Discussion ensued, during which disappointment was expressed that the funding could not be used to support other projects, and reference was made to instances of good initiatives receiving a reduced award due to a lack of funds. Information was also sought, and provided, on the timescale for drawing down grant awards. The Senior Community Development Manager confirmed that an exercise could be carried out, at the end of the financial year, to establish how much grant funding had gone back into the general Inverness Common Good Fund, and that could be taken into consideration in setting the

following year's budget. It would be for the City of Inverness Area Committee to decide whether to allocate a further sum to the grants budget.

On the point being raised, it was explained that feedback on projects that had gone ahead was provided in the evaluation forms (item 12 on the agenda) that were circulated to the Sub-Committee for noting.

Thereafter, following discussion on the merits or otherwise of the application for financial assistance, the Sub-Committee determined it as follows:-

### **Applications up to £5,000**

Applicant: Visit Inverness Loch Ness  
Project/activity: UKInbound Discover Programme  
Amount requested: £5,000.00  
Grant category: City Promotions  
Decision: **APPROVED**

The Senior Community Development Manager explained that the application by Highlands and Islands Enterprise to support a feasibility study into the reestablishment of a Conferencing Resource Function within the city, which it had been indicated would follow, had not yet been received and, if the Sub-Committee so agreed, would be circulated as soon as it was available.

During further discussion, Members raised the need for a new Conference Centre in the city, which it was confirmed would form part of the Inverness Strategy that would be considered by the City of Inverness Area Committee. Information was also sought, and provided, on the previous Conference Resource Function and the timescale for the proposed feasibility study. It having been queried whether there would be any merit in having an events marquee at the Northern Meeting Park rather than incurring hire costs, the Senior Community Development Manager confirmed this suggestion would be fed into the discussions regarding the Northern Meeting Park.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position in relation to current expenditure and existing grants;
- ii. **AGREED** to determine the application for up to and including £5,000 as detailed above;
- iii. **AGREED** that an exercise be carried out, at the end of the financial year, to establish how much grant funding had gone back into the general Inverness Common Good Fund; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the application by Highlands and Islands Enterprise be circulated to Members of the Sub-Committee for consideration as soon as it was available.

## **6. Inverness BID – Grant Applications 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/03/25 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South.

In introducing the report, the Senior Community Development Manager explained that Members were being asked to consider the applications from Inverness BID and make recommendations to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025, at



which the 2025/26 Inverness Common Good Budget would be agreed. The costs associated with the applications had been assimilated into the budget proposals.

The Sub-Committee determined the applications from Inverness BID, as detailed in the appendices to the report, as follows:-

**i. City Centre of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2025**

A lengthy and detailed discussion took place on the issues surrounding the provision of floral displays in both the city centre and the wider city of Inverness, during which information was provided on the complexities and lead-in time associated with the current delivery model, the costs involved and the work that had been undertaken to explore whether there were any alternative delivery models that could be implemented.

Clarification was sought, and provided, on a number of points and, concern having been expressed regarding the current financial climate and the fact that the costs associated with the floral displays had continued to increase while other budgets had been cut back, potential means of reducing costs whilst continuing to support the Grow Project were explored.

Thereafter, Mr A Graham, seconded by Mrs M Reid, **moved** that the Sub-Committee agree to recommend to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the application for funding amounting to £54,272 be approved.

As an **amendment**, Mr C Ballance moved that the funding instead be used to support the floral clock and the other areas around Inverness Castle suggested by the Council's Amenities Team, and that High Life Highland be asked to use the Grow Project to support those sites instead. However, he failed to find a seconder.

**Decision**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding amounting to £54,272 be **APPROVED**.

**ii. Wider City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2025**

Following further discussion, Mr A Graham, seconded by Ms K MacLean, **moved** that the Sub-Committee agree to recommend to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the application for funding amounting to £22,872 be approved.

As an **amendment**, Mr C Ballance, seconded by Mrs M Reid, moved that the Sub-Committee agree to recommend to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the application for funding amounting to £22,872 be refused.

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

**For the Motion:**

Mr M Cameron, Mr A Graham, Dr M Gregson, Mrs I MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr C Ballance, Mrs M Reid.

**Decision**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding amounting to £22,872 be **APPROVED**.

It was further **AGREED** that the matter of Annual Floral Displays be considered by the Sub-Committee in August 2025 to enable recommendations to be made to the City of Inverness Area Committee before any arrangements had been put in place for 2026.

The Senior Community Development Manager confirmed that, in the meantime, he would explore the possibility of a sponsorship package and review the delivery model in conjunction with Inverness BID and the Amenities Team.

**iii. Operation Respect – Task Team Easter, Summer and Autumn 2025**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding amounting to £14,804 be **APPROVED**.

**iv. SAFE Inverness Project 2025-2026**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding amounting to £10,750 be **APPROVED**.

**v. Coach & Visitor Ambassador Project 2025**

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was explained that, before the project had been implemented, coach numbers had been approximately a quarter to a third of current numbers;
- Members commended the professional service provided by the Coach & Visitor Ambassador Team and the difference the project had made to the organisation of coaches visiting the city centre;
- information was sought, and provided, on the reason for the significant increase on the previous year's costs;
- it was queried whether, in future years, coaches would be encouraged to use the Park and Ride at Torvean that was under development; and
- concern was expressed regarding the pressure on local bus services due to cruise ship passengers using buses to travel from Invergordon to Inverness to avoid cruise excursion fees. The Senior Community Development Manager confirmed this matter was under discussion.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding amounting to £23,847 be **APPROVED**.

## vi. Inverness Gull Management Programme 2025

A lengthy and detailed discussion took place on the issues surrounding gull management in Inverness, during which the following main points were raised:-

- a request having been made for the results of the 2024 survey of gull incidences in the city centre, the Senior Community Development Manager confirmed he would liaise with Inverness BID in that regard;
- gulls were simply being displaced to residential areas and areas such as the Longman Industrial Estate, and there was nothing to prevent them returning to the city centre. In relation to the Longman area in particular, the large roofs were hatching grounds for gulls, and information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was anything that could be done to encourage business tenants to share the responsibility for gull management;
- it was clarified that NatureScot would still issue a licence for nest and egg removal as a last resort, but more work was required prior to that stage in terms of deterrents and disrupting pre-nesting behaviour;
- there had been a significant improvement in the city centre since the Gull Management Programme had been introduced;
- concern was expressed regarding incidences of people being dive-bombed in residential areas;
- some people were deliberately feeding the gulls, and there was a need for strong messaging in that regard. In addition, there was a need for gull-proof bins in parks;
- due to the legacy of the Longman Landfill Site, gulls had become accustomed to human food rather than their natural diet. Other Members commented that a lack of food in the sea had driven gulls inland;
- it was questioned whether the reduction in gull numbers in the city was due to the Gull Management Programme or the overall decline in bird species, as the figures appeared to correlate;
- information was sought, and provided, on the responsibilities of the Council's Environmental Health Service, and the Senior Community Development Manager confirmed that discussions were taking place with the Strategic Lead – Environmental Health and Bereavement Services;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the timescales for applying for a licence from NatureScot and the subsequent egg and nest removal activity, and what would happen if NatureScot did not approve the required action plan;
- figures were needed to evidence the impact of the activity taking place. It was not clear whether there had been an increase in the number of gulls in the city centre as a result of egg and nest removal not taking place in 2024, and it was suggested that only the deterrent and public information measures should take place in 2025 so their effectiveness could be established;
- opposition was expressed to the culling of eggs of endangered species;
- it was queried whether funding could be found for a specialist ornithologist report; and
- it was emphasised that gull management issues in Highland were not confined to Inverness.

Thereafter, Mr A Graham, seconded by Mrs M Reid, **moved** that the Sub-Committee agree to recommend to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the application for funding amounting to £27,050 be approved.

As an **amendment**, Mr C Ballance, seconded by Ms K MacLean, moved that it be recommended to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the application for funding be approved with the exception of the first three items of activity in section 1.9, namely, Licence Applications, Submissions, Monitoring and Reporting; Egg and Nest Removal; and Old Nest and Nest Material Removal.

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

**For the Motion:**

Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mrs M Reid.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr C Ballance, Mr M Cameron, Dr M Gregson, Ms K MacLean.

**Decision**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 3 February 2025 that the application for funding be approved with the exception of the first three items of activity in section 1.9, namely, Licence Applications, Submissions, Monitoring and Reporting; Egg and Nest Removal; and Old Nest and Nest Material Removal.

**vii. Revised Inverness Gull Management Programme 2024/25**

In addition to the request to repurpose grant funding of £6,803 awarded in 2024, the Senior Community Development Manager drew attention to the request for additional funding of £9,663, explaining that, if Members were minded to approve, this would require to come from reserves and could only be agreed by the City of Inverness Area Committee.

Further discussion took place, during which it was clarified that the funding was required to carry out pre-nesting activity, to meet the new requirements of NatureScot, in the period from 20 January to 31 March 2025, and it was queried whether there had been double-counting of costs in respect of some activities.

Thereafter, Mr A Graham, seconded by Mrs I MacKenzie, **moved** that it be recommended to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the repurposing of grant funding of £6,803 awarded in 2024 and additional funding of £9,663 for the revised Inverness Gull Management Programme 2024/25 be approved, subject to checks being carried out to ensure there had been no double-counting of costs.

As an **amendment**, Mr C Ballance, seconded by Ms K MacLean, moved that it be recommended to the City of Inverness Area Committee that the re-purposing of grant funding of £6,803 awarded in 2024 be approved and Inverness BID be invited to submit a revised proposal as to how the funding would be spent.

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

**For the Motion:**

Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr C Ballance, Mr M Cameron, Dr M Gregson, Ms K MacLean.

**Decision**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee at its meeting on 3 February 2025 that the re-purposing of grant funding of £6,803 awarded in 2024 be approved and Inverness BID be invited to submit a revised proposal as to how the funding would be spent.

**7. Repurposing of Funding – Riverside Lighting Project**

At its meeting on 7 August 2024, the Sub-Committee had approved £12,175 for the Riverside Lighting Project. Ongoing discussions with Planning colleagues had indicated that this project would not gain approval from planning due to the nature of the works being carried out within a conservation area, so the works could not be progressed.

During the last 12 months there had been various requests for additional CCTV to be placed with the Church Street area of the city. This was due to an increase in anti-social behaviour and drug use being prevalent in the area in and around the burial grounds and School Lane. The location was adjacent to the old town end of Church Street where various businesses such as Leakey's Book Shop, Miele's Gelateria and Wetherspoon's Bar were located. Discussions having taken place with the Lighting and Communications Manager along with the CCTV contractor in the Inverness BID, works had been identified that would enhance CCTV coverage in the area and act as a deterrent to anti-social behaviour. Having this coverage would also support the Police with reports of incidents outside Wetherspoon's Bar.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to repurpose the funds that had been awarded to the Riverside Lighting Project towards CCTV improvements within Inverness City Centre.

**8. Grant Conditions - Process**

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** that powers be delegated to the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South, to withdraw a grant offer in the event that an applicant materially changed the terms of the grant award to the extent that the original purpose of the grant had been compromised. This process would be undertaken in consultation with the Chair of the Sub-Committee who, depending on circumstances, might decide to extend the consultation to include all Members of the Sub-Committee. The decision would be noted at the next appropriate Sub-Committee meeting.

**9. Merkinch Local Nature Reserve**

An update on the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve Boardwalk Replacement and Active Travel project had been circulated.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** to extend the grant for a further six months pending further assessment of viability.

## 10. Homologation Requests

The following applications had been approved by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South, in consultation with the Sub-Committee, subject to homologation at the next available Sub-Committee Meeting:-

### a. Highland Schools Wind Orchestra

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award a grant of £4,000 to the Highland Schools Wind Orchestra for assistance towards their trip to Augsburg, Germany in June 2025. This award would be paid from the Town Twinning Budget.

### b. Inverness Strategy Engagement

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to increase the grant towards hospitality at the Inverness Strategy Engagement Event from £450 to £600.

## 11. Planefield Road Bowling Club

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that essential Health and Safety works to install ramps at the Planefield Road Bowling Club were due to be carried out, and £4,728 has been charged against the Bowling Greens budget.

## 12. Evaluation Forms

Evaluation Forms submitted by applicants on completion of their projects had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet C.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the Evaluation Forms.

## 13. Civic Lighting Requests

Information having been sought, and provided, on the application process, the Sub-Committee **NOTED** the following Civic Lighting requests for the period 1 December 2024 to 29 January 2025:-

- World Aids Day
- Scottish Women's Day
- International Kawasaki Disease Awareness Day
- Chinese New Year Celebration

## 14. Free Hall Lets

Following discussion, during which information was sought, and provided, on the Down Right Gabbler event and the process for approving free hall lets, the Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the following free hall lets up to 31 December 2024:-
- 31 August - Coffee Morning - £360
  - 26 October - Poppy Band Concert - £2259
  - 14 November – Canadian Rotarian - £360
  - 15 November – Maggie’s Jail and Bail - £540
  - 30 November - Down Right Gabbler - £1170
  - 5-7 December – Xmas Fayre - £3540; and
- ii. **AGREED** that, where there was no existing Committee decision supporting the request, Sub-Committee Members be consulted on free hall lets where the costs were over £1000.

## 15. Date of Next Meeting

The Senior Community Development Manager explained that the next meeting had been scheduled to take place on Monday 28 April. However, due to issues in terms of officer availability, it was proposed that it be re-scheduled to Thursday 24 April.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** that the next meeting be re-scheduled to Thursday 24 April at 9.30 am. The Sub-Committee also **NOTED** the timetable below for applications during 2025:-

<b>City of Inverness Area Committee</b>	<b>Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee</b>	<b>Applications due by date</b>
19 May 2025	24 April 2025 (re-scheduled from 28 April 2025)	4 April 2025
18 August 2025	5 August 2025	11 July 2025
17 November 2025	22 October 2025	3 October 2025

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.