



# COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

## SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in the Council Offices, Stornoway, on Wednesday 4 December 2019 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT	Mr Donald F. Crichton (Chair) Mr Norman MacDonald (Vice-Chair) Mr Calum Macmillan Mr Iain A MacNeil Mr Donald Manford Mr Finlay Cunningham Mr Alasdair Macleod Mr Iain M Macaulay	Mr Neil Mackay Mr Gordon Murray Mr Roddie Mackay Mr John A Maciver Mr John Mackay
APOLOGIES	Mr Roddy Mackay	Mr Norman A. MacDonald
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Paul Steele Mr Iain M Macleod Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Rae Mackenzie Mr Charlie Nicolson Mr Calum Maclean
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Malcolm Burr Mr Calum Iain Maciver Mr Joe Macphee Mr John Cunningham Mr Domhnall MacDonald Mr Murdo Mackay Mr Robert Emmott	Mrs Anne Macdonald Mr Nigel Scott Mr Iain Watson Mrs Dolina Macleod Mr Colin G. Morrison Mrs Fiona Maciver Miss Mairi Sine Macdonald

Prayer The Meeting was preceded by prayer, led by Mr John Mackay.

### MINUTES

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| Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2019 | 1 | The Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2019 was <b>approved</b> . |
| Declaration of Interest                | 2 | There were no declarations of interest.                          |

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

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| Performance Management 2019/20 Quarter 2 Economic Development and Planning | 3 | With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2019 the Director for Communities submitted a Report providing an overview of the Communities Department Business Plan progress and related performance for Quarter 2 2019/20. The Report stated that the Communities Department Business Plan had 16 Actions and 18 Key Performance Indicators of relevance to the Committee in respect of Building Standards, Business and Regeneration Support, Sectoral and Project Support, Heritage Services and Planning Services. The Report indicated that all Business Plan Actions and KPIs relevant to the Services were on target and one complaint had been received in the quarter which had been successfully resolved at Stage 1. |
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The Report provided an overview of business performance, risk management, financial performance and stated that over the last period there had been a staff consultation exercise on Service Redesign in order to identify savings options to meet the £306k savings target for 2020/21.

The Report further highlighted the key points and areas of concern in regard to the service areas of Heritage, Planning and Economic Development.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.**

### SERVICE RE-DESIGN

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely: information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee of, or a particular office holder or former office holder, or applicant to become an office holder under, the Comhairle.

Economic  
Development  
Service Redesign  
Update

- 4\* With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2019 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on Service Redesign proposals in relation to Economic Development, including Libraries and Heritage for 2020/21. The Report stated that the Service Redesign savings for Economic Development, Heritage, Libraries and Energy/Strategy Unit amounted to £612,000 for 2019/20 and 2020/21. . A summary of the current Service Redesign savings were detailed in the Report indicating that savings of £306k for 2019/20 had been achieved and the target proposals for 2020/21 was £138k and £168K for 2021/22.

The Report provided an update on progress across the various service functions and outlined a range of options in relation to Library Services and Heritage Services. Other Service Redesign activity had included a review regarding the future strategic direction for service activity and options for consideration were set out in the Report. The Report noted that in relation to the future of the Library Service the Sustainable Development Strategic Member Officer Working Group and the Budget Board had supported Option 2 which was the transfer of the Libraries Service to Education, Skills and Children's Services but to retain Heritage Services within the Communities Department.

It was proposed that a further Report would be provided to the February 2020 Committee series setting out the final options across all service areas for consideration by Members.

**It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests are concerned, that the Comhairle:**

- (1) **note the progress with the development of Service Redesign Options for Economic Development, Libraries and Heritage Service functions;**
- (2) **agree to prepare a future vision for the use of the Stornoway Library building and other town centre buildings and to consult with all affected staff as appropriate regarding options; and**
- (3) **note Option 2 as the preferred option as detailed at paragraph 6.12 of the Report regarding the future of the Library Service.**

### HERITAGE SERVICES

Uist Virtual  
Archaeology Project

- 5 The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report seeking approval of the Comhairle acting as grantee for the delivery of the Uist Virtual Archaeology Project (UVAP). The Report provided an overview of the UVAP project and stated that the Project had been successful in securing funding of £271k from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funded Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund administered by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). A summary of the project costs and funding was detailed at paragraph 5.1 of the Report.

The Report stated that the Comhairle would seek formal approval from SNH to become the Grantee for the ERDF funding, including funding from Lottery Heritage Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The Report further stated that the Comhairle would enter into a Minute of Agreement with Lews Castle UHI in respect of mitigating all Grantee obligations and the overall financial management, monitoring and procurement associated with the project to ensure no unacceptable financial or contractual risks to the Comhairle.

This would provide an excellent opportunity to promote Uist and the wider region as a major destination for archaeology and broader heritage-related tourism and the Committee wished the project every success.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) agree to become the Grantee for the delivery of the Uist Virtual Archaeology Project (UVAP), subject to approval from Scottish Natural Heritage and from other proposed funders namely, Lottery Heritage Fund and Highlands and Islands Enterprise;
- (2) agree to undertake all financial management, monitoring and procurement associated with the UVAP project;
- (3) agree to enter into a Minute of Agreement with the Lews Castle College UHI to ensure that all grant obligations are met by Lews Castle College UHI and that there are no unacceptable financial or contractual risks to the Comhairle as a result of becoming the Grantee; and
- (4) approve funding of £17,220 from the Revenue Match Fund to support the UVAP project, subject to approval of all other match funding.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely: information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle).

Former Co-op  
Building, Castlebay,  
Isle of Barra -  
Update

- 6\* With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2019 the Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report providing an update on the current situation regarding the former Co-op Store in Castlebay, Isle of Barra occupied by Bùth Bharraigh. The Report stated that Bùth Bharraigh's Community Asset Transfer request had been validated by officers in the Assets, Finance and Resources Department who continued to assess the request and that as part of that process an advert had been placed in Guth Bharraigh informing the local community of the request and invited responses by 22 November 2019. Road safety analysis of the site had been undertaken by Comhairle Officers and their observations were detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report.

The Report further stated that there remained significant financial and other risks to the Comhairle in considering any other option other than adhering to the contractual agreement with Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Fund grant, the extant Comhairle decision and the view of the community through Castlebay Community Council.

The Head of Economic Development and Planning further submitted a supplementary Report which provided updates in relation to the Community Asset Transfer request and discussions with the Scottish Government.

**It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests are concerned, that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the current situation regarding Bùth Bharraigh and the additional information provide in the Supplementary Report to the Committee;
- (2) agree that subject to considering of the outstanding information, that the Comhairle proceed to adhere to the grant conditions for the Scottish Government's Regeneration Capital Grant Fund , including demolition of the former Co-op Store, Castlebay, Isle of Barra; and
- (3) authorise the Director for Communities to take the necessary action to implement the Comhairle's decision.

Scottish  
Government  
Consultation  
The Principles of a  
Local Discretionary  
Transient Levy or  
Tourist Tax

- 7 The Head of Economic Development and Planning submitted a Report seeking homologation of a Comhairle response to the Scottish Government Consultation on “The Principles of a Local Discretionary Transient Visitor Levy or Tourist Tax”. The Report stated that the consultation process opened on 9 September 2019 to 2 December 2019 on the principles of a Local Discretionary Transient Visitor Levy or Tourist Tax and sought views from local authorities on a broad proposition to choose to apply a levy on visitors staying overnight.

In particular the consultation sought views to ensure that the legislation:

- supported the continuing success of the tourism industry in Scotland;
- provided the powers that were needed for local authorities to respond to local pressures; and
- minimised the administrative burdens for those affected.

The Report further stated that the Scottish Government had conducted a partial Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) which highlighted the costs and benefits of two options but did not quantify costs of collection and related administrative burden. The Comhairle’s response to the consultation was detailed in the Appendix to the Report and had been endorsed by the Sustainable Development Strategic MOWG on 11 November 2019 as the deadline for submission had been 2 December 2019.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agrees to homologate the response to Scottish Government Consultation on the Principles of a Local Discretionary Transient Visitor Levy or Tourist Tax, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.**

## RENEWABLES

Scottish  
Government Local  
Energy Policy  
Statement

- 8 The Chief Executive submitted a Report proposing a draft response to the Scottish Government’s consultation on a Local Energy Policy Statement and seeking the Comhairle’s support for a proposed Local Electricity Bill which aligned closely with the Comhairle’s plans for a Local Energy Economy. The draft consultation response was appended to the Report and expressed views on the challenges facing community generators seeking to connect to Grid and the key points were summarised at Paragraph 5.2 to the Report.

The Report provided details of a new Local Electricity Bill, which had cross Party support, and the potential to transform the UK’s electricity market, instructing the Regulator, OFGEM, to issue simplified Local Supply Licenses at a cost proportionate to the scale of the local supply operation. At present, prospective local electricity suppliers seeking to obtain a Supply License from OFGEM face prohibitive costs and a web of regulations. The ambitions of the Local Electricity Bill aligned closely with the Comhairle’s aspirations and the sponsors of the Bill had requested that the Comhairle pass a deliverance as detailed at Paragraph 6.5 to the Report.

At present, the UK electricity distribution regime was not configured to accommodate ‘islanded’ networks and community generators are compelled to sell their product to Grid to achieve the Rate of Return stipulated by borrowers and the costs of establishing a community owned Electricity Supply Company are prohibitive. The Comhairle’s vision is for electricity from on-island generation to be retailed to island consumers by a community owned Electricity Supply Company at as near cost price as the Regulator will allow and the proposed Local Electricity Bill goes some way to facilitating this arrangement. It was noted that the Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the dissolution of Parliament but would be represented in the first quarter of 2020 with a new back bench sponsor and had been well supported.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree:**

- (1) **the draft response to the Scottish Government’s Local Energy Policy Statement as outlined in the Appendix to the Report; and**
- (2) **the principles of the proposed Local Electricity Bill as outlined at Paragraph 6.5 of the Report.**

Outline Outer Hebrides Energy Strategy 2020-2030 9 With reference to item 15 of the Minute of Meeting of 18 June 2014 the Chief Executive submitted a Report outlining a new Outer Hebrides Energy Strategy which would guide the work of the Comhairle in Energy matters over the next ten years. The Report stated that the Comhairle's existing Energy Strategy published in 2014 had focused heavily on delivery of the Radial Connector as the catalyst for a range of other developments, commercial and community. However, as significant changes had taken place in the island Energy landscape since publication it was considered that a new Energy Strategy should be developed. Recent changes in the regulatory regime had led to Distribution Network Operators (DNO's) (historically, Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution (SHEPD) for the Outer Hebrides) becoming re-classified as Distribution System Operators or DSO's with a stronger requirement on them to enable the development of integrated energy systems.

The Report further stated that there had been an area of growth in Hydrogen production for local use (heat and transport) and for export and that the new Energy Strategy would seek to capture these opportunities, harnessing Floating Offshore Wind as an additional means of production.

A draft Outline Outer Hebrides Energy Strategy was provided in the Appendix to the Report, proposing headline work areas that would have a key role in ensuring that electricity generated in the islands was retailed on the island without Distribution side Transmission Charges and Shareholder Dividends driving up price. The Strategy recognised the importance of community generation which brought in over £2m per annum and that the Western Isles had the largest community sector in the UK.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the outline Outer Hebrides Energy Strategy for 2020 to 2030.**

#### PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Reports Outstanding 10 The Chief Executive submitted a Report detailing the Report outstanding arising from the decisions of the Committee.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.**