



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

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Minute of Meeting held in Council Offices,
Stornoway on Wednesday 12 February 2025 at.
11.00am

PRESENT

Mr Kenneth Macleod (Convener)	
Mr Paul Steele (Leader)	
Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE (Depute Leader)	Mr John N Macleod
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Calum Maclean
Ms Susan Thomson	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Kenneth M Macleod	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Robert Mackenzie	Dr Frances Murray
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr George Murray
Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr Norrie Macdonald
Mr Norman Macdonald	Mr Finlay M Stewart

APOLOGIES

Mr Donald F Crichton

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Derek Mackay
Mr Tim Langley	Mr Colin G Morrison
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr Niall Houston
Mr Calum Mackenzie	Mr James Mackinnon
Mrs Anne Murray	Mrs Marina Macaulay
Mr Sandy Gomez	

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded with prayer, led by Mr Calum Maclean.

Tribute: Mr Angus
A Morrison

The Convener paid tribute to Mr Angus M Morrison, former Member of the Comhairle, who passed away on 19 January 2025. Mr Morrison had served as a Member for the Port of Ness Ward from 1978 to 1982 and served on the Education Committee, Housing Committee and Finance Committee.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mr Morrison's wife, Dolina, his family and friends.

Tribute: Elizabeth
McAtear, OBE

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mrs Elizabeth McAtear, Barra, who had received an OBE in the New Years Honours List, for services to the Western Isles.

Tribute: Charlie
Nicolson, BEM

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Charlie Nicolson, Stornoway, who had received a BEM in the New Year Honours List for voluntary and charitable services in the Western Isles.

Tribute: Bill Lawson, BEM	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Bill Lawson, Harris, who had received a BEM in the New Years Honours List for services to the community in the Western Isles.
Tribute: Mr Leslie Eller, 100 th Birthday	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended congratulations to Mr Leslie Eller who had recently celebrated his 100 th Birthday.
Tribute: Mr Mustapha Hocine	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mr Mustapha Hocine, whose sister had passed away recently.
Tribute: Mr Robert Emmott	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Robert Emmott, previous Director of Assets, Finance and Resources, who had recently been appointed as Executive Director of Financial Services at Glasgow City Council.
Tribute: Peter Mackay, Scotland's Makar	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Peter Mackay, Lower Shader, Isle of Lewis, who had been appointed Scotland's Makar (National Poet) by John Swinney, First Minister.
Tribute: Kerry Macphee, South Uist	The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Kerry Macphee, South Uist, who had become British 24 Hour Endurance Champion after winning the 24 hour mountain bike Strathpuffer race on her debut.
Tribute: Murdo Morrison, Bragar and Wishaw	<p>The Convener referred to Murdo Morrison, originally from Bragar, who had passed away on 19 January 2025. Mr Morrison had served on the board of the Harris Tweed Authority from 1999 to 2015 and was for some time President of the Robert Burns Federation, often using his role on international trips to promote Harris Tweed across the globe.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mr Morrison's wife Hazel, his son Aonghas and to all his family and friends.</p>
Tribute: Mrs Alma Jamieson	<p>The Convener referred to Mrs Alma Jamieson, from Stornoway, who had passed away on 19 January 2025. Mrs Jamieson had worked as a music teacher for many years before becoming a music advisor for the Comhairle and following her retirement she continued to help many soloists prepare for the Royal National Mod. Mrs Jamieson won the Gold Medal at the Royal National Mod in 1958, at just 18 years of age.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mrs Jamieson's sons Douglas and Rodney and to all her family and friends.</p>
Tribute: Alexander Maciver	<p>The Convener referred to Alexander Maciver who had passed away on 26 January 2025, after a short period of ill health. Mr Maciver had been Headteacher of Knock School from 1975-1994.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mr Maciver's wife Mary Alice, daughters Ishbel, Joan and Alison, his grandchildren and two sisters Annetta and Chrissie.</p>
Tribute: Murdo A Macleod	The Convener referred to Murdo A Macleod who had passed away in Edinburgh recently. Mr Macleod was a much respected member of the Art Department at The Nicolson Institute.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mr Macleod's family, friends and former pupils.

Tribute: Helen Bayly

The Convener referred to Mrs Helen Bayly, former English and Support for Learning Teacher, The Nicolson Institute, who had passed away recently.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended condolences to Mrs Bayly's family.

Tribute: Highlands and Islands Media Awards

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended congratulations to the following, who had won Awards at the Highlands and Islands Media Awards:

- Mr Eric Mackinnon, Stornoway Gazette, who won the Sports Reporter of the Year Award;
- Fios, the Ness Community Newspaper, which won the Community Newspaper of the Year Award;
- Shona Macdonald, BBC, who had won the Bòrd na Gàidhlig Award; and
- Mr John White, West Highland Free Press, who had won the Environment and Sustainability Award.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 4 December 2024 1

The Minute of Meeting of 4 December 2024 was **approved**.

Declaration of Interest 2

There were no declarations of interest.

QUESTIONS

Written Questions to the Convener and Chairmen of Committees 3

The following written questions to the Convener, were submitted by Cllr Gordon Murray:

Question 1

It is likely that the Convener will rule that the report of the Policy and Resources committee, to be considered by the Comhairle on 26 February 2025 when it sets the council tax for 2025-26, as an urgent item. What impact would it have on the Council's decision with regard to the setting of the Council Tax for the next financial year, if the convener did not rule that the report of the Policy and Resources Committee was to be considered as an urgent item?

The Convener responded as follows:

This question does not constitute relevant or competent business as it is asking about a meeting that has not taken place. I therefore rule, in terms of Standing Order 25, that the question is out of order.

Question 2

At a recent meeting of the Sustainable Development Committee the view was expressed that the Comhairle should look for Casino-type community payback for the Western Isles communities as a result of wind farm developments. The Highland Council's current policy on Community benefits associated with wind farm developments which sets out community benefit expectations from renewables developers of £12,500 per MW. What is the Comhairle's current policy concerning Community benefits associated with windfarm developments?

The Convener responded as follows:

We have discussed our policies and wishes regarding Community Benefit on many occasions, and the current position is as follows: Scottish Government's Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy Developments Good Practice Guidance proposes a figure of £5,000 per MW installed which should now be around £7,500 to take account of inflation. The Comhairle has promoted onshore, arrangements at £5,000 per MW confirmed plus land rentals for Estate and crofters plus the offer of 20% in Stornoway and Uisenis Wind Farms. The amount of money saved by the community through not having to go through the project development process, and the value of the inherited parent developer's Contract for Difference, are incalculable. The Comhairle is streets ahead of the rest of the UK in terms of the scale of Shared Ownership being pursued (and delivered).

For Offshore Developments - in the absence of any Government Guidance - we invited Northland Power, through voluntary MoU, to consider two Community Benefit 'Pots' – Pot 1 for the five Community Estates directly affected (to which Northland Power has already committed £5,000 per MW or £4.5m per annum index linked for 35 years) and Pot 2 for application by the Comhairle to improvements from the Butt to Barra. The quantum of Pot 1 is already known but Pot 2 is still under negotiation

The Highland Council's 'Social Value Charter' follows the Comhairle's lead in proposing a 'Community Fund' and a 'Strategic Fund' which asks developers to contribute to a central fund which will support economic development and general prosperity across the Highlands. But ultimately it is agreements not aspirations which will make the difference.

Question 3

What statutory process did the Comhairle follow when the Sandwickhill Learning Centre was closed particularly with regard to:

- 1) Notice and Consultation period
- 2) The Public meeting
- 3) HM Inspectors' involvement
- 4) Questions, inaccuracies and omissions
- 5) Requests for additional information
- 6) The consultation report
- 7) New and different options
- 8) Rural aspects

The Convener responded as follows:

Sandwickhill Resource Centre was not a school and was not subject to statutory process. As such, points 1-8 were not applicable in this case. The children who attended Sandwickhill Resource Centre remained on the School Roll in their own Schools.

Mr Gordon Murray asked the following supplementary question:

Where was the provisions in the Education Act for a Local Authority to set up a Learning Centre?

The Convener responded that he would come back to Cllr Murray with an answer to his supplementary question.

Question 4

Does the convener believe that the Comhairle's decision to give financial backing to the Midnight Sun Festival achieved value for money?

The Convener responded as follows:

This question does not constitute relevant or competent business as it is asking about the personal views of an Elected Member. I therefore rule, in terms of Standing Order 25, that the question is out of order.

Committee
Decision Reports

4

COMMITTEES

The following Committee Decision Reports were approved:

- (a) Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee – 4 February 2025
- (b) Sustainable Development Committee – 4 February 2025
- (c) Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – 5 February 2025
- (d) Policy and Resources Committee – 5 February 2025

In relation to Item 16 of the Committee Decision Report of the Policy and Resources Committee of 5 February 2025, Cllr Gordon Murray, seconded by Cllr Calum Maclean, moved the following amendment:

“that expenditure incurred on the Comhairle @ 50 event be capped at 50% of the planned expenditure as detailed in the report by the chief executive entitled Comhairle @ 50 update and the council recognising the severe financial difficulties facing many in our communities agrees to use all of the budgetary provision referred to in the report by the chief executive on the Comhairle @ 50 in excess of the aforementioned 50% to increase the budget allocated for providing assistance to people who very much need it under the provisions of Section 12 of the Social Work Scotland Act (1968).”

The Convener stated that, as the amendment proposed a change to a decision taken by the Comhairle within the previous 12 months, a suspension of Standing Orders would be required, in terms of Standing Order 67, to consider the matter.

The Comhairle proceeded to vote on whether or not to suspend Standing Orders, the result of which was as follows:

YES

Mr John A Maciver
Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Gordon Murray

NO

Mr Kenneth Macleod (Convener)
Mr Paul Steele (Leader)
Mr Duncan Macinnes MBE (Depute Leader)
Mr Kenneth J Maclean
Mr Iain A MacNeil
Mr Iain M Macleod
Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Mustapha Hocine
Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr Kenneth M Macleod
Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr John N Macleod
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Angus McCormack

Dr Frances Murray
Mr George Murray
Mr Norrie Macdonald
Mr Finlay M Stewart

(e) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 6 February 2025