



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Talla na Mara,
Niseabost, Isle of Harris, on Wednesday 25
September 2024 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT	Mr Paul Steele (Chair) Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE (Vice-Chair) Mr Kenneth J Maclean Mr Iain M Macleod Mr Uisdean Robertson Mr Kenny M Macleod Mr Robert Mackenzie	Mr Norman Macdonald Mr Kenneth Macleod Mr Donald F Crichton Dr Frances Murray Mr Norrie Macdonald
APOLOGIES	Mr Paul Finnegan	
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Iain A MacNeil Mr Angus Morrison Mr Ranald Fraser Mr Donald Macsween Mr John A Maciver	Mr Iain M Macaulay Mr Gordon Murray Mr Rae Mackenzie Mr Angus McCormack
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Malcolm Burr Mr Norman Macdonald Mr Sandy Gomez Ms Norma Skinner Mr Malcolm Macpherson Mrs Carmen Macdonald Mr James Mackinnon Mr David Macleay Mr Niall Houston	Ms Anne Murray Mr Dan Macphail Ms Anna Hulme Mr Colin G Morrison Mrs Alison MacCorquodale Mr Nigel Scott Mrs Charlene Macmillan Mrs Marina Macaulay
Prayer	The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Mr Duncan MacInnes	

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024	1	(a) The Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024 was approved . (b) The Minute of Meeting of 18 July 2024 was approved .
Minute of Meeting of 18 July 2024		
Declaration of Interest	2	Mr Iain M Macleod and Mr Kenny Macleod declared an interest in Item 10 as they were Board Members of Tighean Innse Gall and left the meeting during consideration of the matter.
Minute of Meeting of Budget and Strategy Board of 19 August 2024	3	The Minute of Meeting of the Budget and Strategy Board of 19 August 2024 was noted .
Minute of Meeting of Community	4	The Minute of Meeting of the Community Safety Board of 18 September 2024 was noted and items 3-6 were recommended for approval .

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Safety Board of 18
September 2024

Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 23 September 2024 5 The Minute of Meeting of the Human Resources Sub-Committee of 23 September 2024 was **noted**.

Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 24 September 2024 6 The Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 24 September 2024 was **noted and the recommendation at item 5 was recommended for approval**.

Local Governance: Single Authority Model 7 With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 26 April 2023 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the development of a Single Authority Model for local governance in the Western Isles. The processes which were being followed, and the engagement with both Ministers and other Government organisations and agencies to develop this work was outlined in the Report. The Statement of Benefits of a Single Authority Model was appended to the Report. The Report also stated that the Comhairle had deepened ties with Argyll and Bute Council, which had similar ambitions for the Argyll and Bute area and were working jointly on the production of materials and additional work on the complex financial, legal and organisational work required to take forward the publication of a model, or models, for a single authority governance structure in the Western Isles by the end of the financial year.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the progress of work with Scottish Government towards the development and implementation of a single authority model of local governance in the Western Isles.

Cyber Incident Update 8 With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the recovery from the cyber attack on the Comhairle's Information Technology systems. The Report stated that the Comhairle continued to work with partners and, while significant progress had been made, the service recovery process would remain in place for months. The costs associated with the recovery processes were significant and the Comhairle was in discussion with Scottish Government in relation to a level of assistance in meeting these additional costs.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the update on recovery from the cyber-attack on the Comhairle's Information Technology (IT) systems.

FINANCE

Capital Outturn 2023-24 9 With reference to item 18 of the Minute of Meeting of 22 June 2022 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which provided an update on the Capital Outturn for 2023-24. It was stated in the Report that projects totalling £28.2m had been carried forward from the 2018-23 Capital Programme and the delivery of these projects was ongoing. The Report stated that during 2023-24, £16.2m of expenditure had been incurred, largely on projects carried forward from the 2018-23 Capital Programme and the full breakdown was provided in the appendix to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note:

(1) the capital expenditure as detailed in the Appendix to the Report; and

- (2) that the Chief Financial Officer would circulate an update on Capital Outturn to Elected Members.**

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 in terms of 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).

Mr Iain M Macleod and Mr Kenny M Macleod declared an interest in item 10 as Board Members of Tighean Innse Gall and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

Crown Estate Revenues Round 5 – Pan Island Distribution	10*	With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 22 June 2022 the Chief Executive submitted a Report concerning the distribution of the Crown Estate Revenues Round 5 Pan-Island Fund, which had been developed using a scoring matrix applied to all projects, based on Comhairle priorities and economic or community benefits. The Scoring Matrix was attached to the Report along with the scoring details for each project.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) support Tighean Innse Gall with funding of £65,310;**
- (2) support Macaulay College with funding of £34,471; and**
- (3) note that Tighean Innse Gall and Macaulay College intend to submit applications for further support from any Pan Island Competitive Fund within year 6 of the Crown Estate Revenue Fund.**

Strategic Risk	11	The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval for the Strategic Risk Register. The Report stated that the Comhairle had identified 15 strategic threats, and the profile of these risk were provided in the Appendix to the Report. A summary of the Risk Register and an overview of changes to risk rating over the previous reporting period was provided at Appendix 1 to the Report. The detailed Risk Register was provided at Appendix 2 to the Report.
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It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee’s interests were concerned, that the Comhairle approve the Strategic Risk Register at Appendix 2 of the Report.

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 in terms of Paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, 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 in terms of Paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, information relating to the adoption, care, fostering or education of any particular child or relating to the supervision or residence of any particular child in accordance with a supervision requirement made in respect of that child under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Residential Placements for Children and Young People	12*	With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Head of Children’s Services/Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed the provision in relation to Specialist Mainland Placements for children and young people and of the budgetary implications arising from these placements. Appendix 1 to the Report highlighted the projected underspend figures for 2023/24.
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It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee’s interests were concerned, that the Comhairle note the financial position for specialist residential provision for 2023/24.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Barra and Vatersay Community Campus 13

With reference to item 2 of the Minute of Meeting of 18 July 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress of the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project. The Report noted that following the Special Meeting of the Comhairle held on 18 July 2024, work has focussed on implementing the decisions agreed by the Comhairle and particularly in relation to selecting a preferred delivery strategy, procurement route, including appointment of professional services. In relation to external funding, regular dialogue continues with Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) colleagues as well as communication with the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health. Project affordability, and the funding landscape generally, remains extremely challenging. However, the need to progress a re-scoped project to market testing stage is seen as being key to unlocking these affordability challenges.

The Report further indicated that due to the change in project scope and delivery vehicle, there is a need to revise the project governance structure which previously included hubNorth Scotland Limited (hNSL) as delivery vehicle and NHS Western Isles (NHS WI) as co-project sponsor. The Project Executive Board, which comprised senior officials from the Comhairle, NHS WI, hNSL and Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) is now no longer required but a new Project Board is necessary to reflect the different scope of the Project. The revised project governance arrangements were set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee’s interests were concerned, that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the Report: and**
- (2) agrees the revised project governance arrangements as set out in Appendix 1 of the Report with both Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh Elected Members appointed as members of the Project Board.**

STRATEGY

Customer Service Strategy 14

The Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which sought approval of the updated Customer Service Strategy. The Report stated that the updated Customer Service Strategy aimed to redesign services to make them simple to deliver and easy for customers to access with the aim to optimise processes to remove delay and duplication and gather feedback from customers to help design services better. It was further stated that the Strategy was aligned to both the National and Local Digital Strategy and aimed to design services in order that digital becomes the channel of choice and that most customer enquiries and transactions can be handled through digital channels.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approves:

- (1) the updated Customer Service Strategy set out in Appendix 1 to the Report;**
- (2) the Customer Care Standard as set out in Appendix 2 to the Report; and**
- (3) that an update on the arrangements to ensure security and safety of Comhairle staff is submitted to the Policy and Resources Committee.**

Communications Strategy 15

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval of a Strategy for the Comhairle’s internal and external communications. The Report stated that the Strategy sought to improve external communications by increasing engagement between

Members, Officers and the Communications Team. The draft Strategy was appended to the Report and, in line with the Comhairle’s Gaelic Language Policy, the Strategy outlined the importance of Gaelic in internal and external communications.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) approves the Communications Policy, appended to the Report;**
- (2) approves the creation of brand guidelines by November 2024;**
- (3) approves the undertaking of a review of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar social media accounts and new Social Media Policy by November 2024;**
- (4) approves the creation of an Emergency Communications Plan by November 2024; and**
- (5) would engage directly with the Communications Team on external and internal communications.**

Digitalisation Strategy – Progress Report 16

With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 November 2022 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress achieved to date on the implementation of the Comhairle’s Digitalisation Strategy, which had been developed and approved in November 2022 the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Strategy highlighted the significance and opportunities arising from digitisation. A performance monitoring report based on the Digitalisation Action Plan was appended to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the report and the progress that has been made to date on the implementation of the Digitalisation Strategy.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Draft Business Travel and Expenses Policy 17

With reference to item 19 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 November 2022 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval of the Draft Business Travel and Draft Expenses Policy. It was stated in the Report that it had been proposed that the maximum allowable rates which could be claimed of subsistence be increased, following feedback from Corporate Management Team that the current rates were insufficient given the increases in costs for meals and overnight expenses.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Draft Business Travel Policy, Draft Expenses Policy and Employee Expenses Rates appended to the Report.

Post Entry Training and Education Policy 18

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval of the revised Post Entry Training and Education Policy and the related training agreement. The documents had been updated to include clear guidance with regard to both continuity of employment and liability for refund of assistance should an employee subsequently leave the Comhairle employment earlier than stipulated following the undertaking of a support learning and development opportunity.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the revised Post Entry Training and Education Policy and related Training Agreement.

Hybrid Working Policy 19

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval for a Hybrid Working Policy. It was stated in the Report that updates had been made to the draft Policy by

Corporate Management Team and the Employee Joint Consultative Committee and the updates had been included in the draft Policy appended to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Hybrid Working Policy appended to the Report.

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 in terms of Paragraphs 9 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Comhairle in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services.

Spaceport Project Update 1 20*

With reference to item 15 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Spaceport 1 Project and an overview of project expenditure to facilitate the further development of the project.

The Report stated that the Comhairle had led on the Spaceport 1 project since its inception. Through the provision of modest, generic infrastructure, Spaceport 1 will meet the requirements of a range of commercial operators of suborbital launch vehicles. Planning consent was granted on 26 July 2023.

The Report provided an update on progress since April 2024, as well as an overview of project expenditure to date, detailed anticipated future costs and detailed the proposed funding package to complete this critical phase of the development.

The Report further stated that upon completion of this phase and procurement of a private sector operator, the Comhairle's role as lead developer would end. It was anticipated however, that the Comhairle would retain an interest in elements such as community benefit, the wider development of Scolpaig Farm and in supporting the operator to ensure that the economic benefits associated with the spaceport were maximised.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the update on progress since April 2024;**
- (2) note the confirmed pre-construction costs in Tables 1 and 2 of the Report, and the overall financial position of the enabling infrastructure phase of the Spaceport 1 project;**
- (3) approve funding of £600k from the Comhairle's Islands Deal capital match fund to lever in financial support from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and secure the £1m allocation from the Islands Growth Deal; and**
- (4) agree to award the construction contract, subject to ongoing discussions with Highlands and Islands Enterprise of their financial contribution to the enabling infrastructure phase of the Spaceport 1 project.**

Request for Assistance: Jo Cox Foundation 21

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which detailed the approach by the Jo Cox Foundation seeking a donation from the Comhairle towards its work. The Report stated that the Foundation had a budget of around £600k and was supported by a number of charitable trusts and foundations, corporate donors, government grants and individual donors.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle do not make a contribution to the Jo Cox Foundation.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW

Reports
Outstanding:
Progress

22

With reference to item 14 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which outlined the Reports Outstanding arising from decisions of the Committee.

It was agreed to note the Report.

