



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Wednesday 30
April 2025 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

Mr Paul Steele (Chair)	Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE (Vice-Chair)	Mr Kenny M Macleod
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Dr Frances Murray
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr Norman Macdonald
Ms Susan Thomson	
Mr Uisdean Robertson	

APOLOGIES

Mr Donald F Crichton

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Angus McCormack

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mrs Rebecca Macleod
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mrs Anne Macdonald
Mr Calum Mackenzie	Mrs Charlene Macmillan
Ms Norma Skinner	Mr Dan Macphail
Mr Colm Fraser	Mr Niall Houston
Ms Anne Murray	Mr Iain N Campbell
Mrs Emma Macsween	Mr Sandy Gomez
Mr Tim Langley	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mr John Cunningham	Mrs Joanne Morrison
Mrs Carmen Macdonald	Mrs Marina Macaulay

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer, led by Mr Angus Morrison.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of: 1

- (a) 5 February 2025
- (b) 25 February 2205 at 2.00pm
- (c) 25 February 2025 at 3.00pm

- (a) The Minute of Meeting of 5 February 2025 was **approved**.
- (b) The Minute of Meeting of 25 February 2025 at 2.00pm was **approved**.
- (c) The Minute of Meeting of 25 February 2025 at 3.00pm was **approved**.

Declaration of Interest 2

Mr Paul Steele declared an interest in item 13 as Chair of Southend Football Club and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

Mr Uisdean Roberston declared an interest in Item 13 as Chair of Comunn Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

Mr Angus McCormack wished to record, in respect of item 20, that he attends meetings of Sandwickhill Development Trust. Mr McCormack did not consider this to be an interest that needed to be declared in terms of the code of conduct.

Minute of Meeting of Barra and Vatersay Community Campus on 26 March 2025	3	The Minute of Meeting of the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus Project Board of 26 March 2025 was noted .
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Minute of Meeting of Community Safety Board of 23 April 2025	4	The Minute of Meeting of the Community Safety Board of 23 April 2025 was noted and items 4, 5, 6 and 7 were recommended for approval .
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Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 24 April 2025	5	The Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 24 April 2025 was noted .
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Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 29 April 2025	6	The Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 29 April 2025 was noted and items 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 were recommended for approval .
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PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Service Business Plans and Operational Risk Registers 2025/26	7	With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of April 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval of the Comhairle's Service Business Plans and Operational Risk Registers 2025/26.
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The Comhairle approved the five-year Operational Plan and associated Service Business Plans (SBPs) 2022-2027 in February 2022 that were prepared in accordance with the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved a new SBP Report format in October 2022 that was designed to provide Members with a more comprehensive and informed picture of each service, including the funding and staffing resources identified to implement each SBP.

The Report stated that from 2024/25, all SBPs are presented to the April Series of Meetings for approval to ensure all sections of the SBPs are as up to date as possible.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle approve the Service Business Plans and Operational Risk Registers 2025/26 appended to the Report.

Business Continuity Plans	8	With reference to item 7 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the status of Business Continuity Management across the Comhairle.
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The Report stated that risks that resulted in a disruption to the service required continuity strategies in place to allow service delivery to continue with minimum disruption. Services had been asked to prepare a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for their

most critical activities, therefore in the event of an incident that causes disruption, the BCP can be picked up and immediately actioned.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle note the Report.

Performance Project Transformation Plan	9	The Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the Performance Transformation Project. The Report detailed stage 1 of the Business Case, which set out the framework of the project and initial work undertaken by the Project Team. The Policy Objectives were also detailed in the Report, along with a number of identified service and corporate risks associated with the Project. An update on Stage 2 of the Business Case would be reported to the June 2024 series of meetings.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle notes Stage 1 of the Business Case and work undertaken by the Performance Project Team from February to April 2025.

FINANCE AND STRATEGY

Quarter 3 Revenue Outturn 2024/25	10	The Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which detailed the Comhairle's forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25. A summary of the financial performance to the end of December 2024 was appended to the Report.
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It was agreed that the Comhairle note the Report.

Corporate Strategy 2024-2027: Delivery of Key Strategic Outcomes	11	With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 29 November 2023 the Chief Executive submitted a Report in relation to the delivery of the key strategic outcomes within the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and the measures required to progress these within the current term of the Comhairle. The Report identified a number of key strategic outcomes which could be advanced for delivery of the Corporate Strategy within this term of the Comhairle. They each reflect at least one of the four Strategic Priorities set out within the Corporate Strategy and are both consistent with and complementary to these Strategic Priorities.
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The Report stated that the implementation and monitoring of progress would be undertaken through the Budget and Strategy Board in the first instance. The Report also provided information about co-working with Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils to take forward mutual strategic work.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) agree the advancement of the following specific strategic outcomes:**
 - (i) Western Isles Renewable Energy Dividend**
 - (ii) Housing: Opportunities and Innovation**
 - (iii) Gàidhlig**
 - (iv) Family Friendly Support**
 - (v) Connectivity Enhancement**
 - (vi) Climate Resilient Infrastructure**
- (2) notes that an implementation plan for advancement of these strategic outcomes will be submitted to the next meeting of the Budget and Strategy Board.**
- (3) notes that the Comhairle will undertake joint work with Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils to take forward mutual strategic policy goals; and**

- (4) **authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, to engage Consultants, jointly with Orkney and Shetland Islands Councils, to provide focused political and communications activity.**

Outer Hebrides
Energy Hub (Islands
Growth Deal) 12

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Chief Planning Officer submitted a Report which sought approval of proposed changes to the Outer Hebrides Energy Hub project within the Islands Growth Deal (IGD).

The Report stated that the Outer Hebrides Energy Hub builds on the Comhairle's vision for high value, local Hydrogen production which first found expression in the Creed Park Hydrogen Fuelling Station (2007). Since then, the award-winning Outer Hebrides Local Energy Hub project which created a circular economy from anaerobic digestion of fish waste through electrolysis into Hydrogen for Comhairle fleet and Oxygen for new smolt production and field leading work on Hydrogen at Lews Castle College have kept the Outer Hebrides in the vanguard of Hydrogen.

The Report further stated that the original IGD proposal was heavily reliant on SGN's conversion of their 1,700 consumer Stornoway Town Centre gas network from Propane to Hydrogen. However, a key UK Government decision on whether Hydrogen should be permitted for heat in homes has been delayed until late 2026 and this has introduced an added element of risk to the original Energy Hub proposal.

In order to de-risk the Energy Hub project and focus it more tightly with a more manageable match-funding package, the Net Zero Technology Centre (NZTC) has been commissioned to develop a revised Outline Business Case for the project based on local demand, deliverable with or without SGN involvement but with capability to ramp up quickly should the SGN conversion be authorised.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the revised scope of the Outer Hebrides Energy Hub, as outlined in the Report.

Community
Regeneration
Partnership 13

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought agreement of the Comhairle's priority projects for the Community Regeneration Partnership with UK Government. The Report stated that the previously outlined implementation timetable remained on track, with fieldwork scheduled for the week beginning 12 May 2025, during which time a team of UK Government officials would carry out stakeholder engagement and research across the Outer Hebrides.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree the proposed priorities for Community Regeneration Partnership funding, as set out in paragraph 7.2 of the Report.

Town Centre
Legacy Fund 14

The Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report seeking approval of the allocation of the balance within the Town Centre Legacy Fund, and the utilisation of the capital income from the sale of 49-51 Cromwell Street.

The Town Centre Legacy Fund was established in 2012 to reinvest rental income from two properties purchased through the Scottish Government's Town Centre Regeneration Fund, back into Stornoway Town Centre. A Scheme of Administration was agreed by the Comhairle in June 2014, to cover utilisation of the fund between 2014-2017.

The Report further stated that 49-51 Cromwell Street was disposed of during 24/25, generating a capital receipt of £453k for the Comhairle. The Report proposed that £230k of the capital receipt be utilised toward the Medical Adaptation Budget within the 2023-28 Capital Programme. Due to level of demand for major and minor adaptations it is projected that the £2m allocation within the current Capital Programme will be fully committed before the end of the current Capital Programme, leaving the Comhairle at

risk of breaching its Statutory Duty. This contribution will go some way towards reducing this risk.

The current revenue balance within the Town Centre Legacy Fund stands at £101,231. It was agreed in 2021/22 that £45k would be ring-fenced towards the Comhairle's Town Centre Painting Scheme. This was not drawn down as the core budget for the scheme continued to 2024/25 but has now been taken as a budget saving. As there would no longer be any income to the Town Centre Legacy Fund, and as the Scheme of Administration is now out of date, the Report sought agreement on proposals to utilise the balance over the next three financial years.

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

- (1) agree that £230k of the capital receipt from the sale of 49-51 Cromwell Street be used to supplement the Medical Adaptations budget within the 2023-28 Capital Programme;**
- (2) note that the remainder will be retained within the capital programme for spend in line with Comhairle priorities; and**
- (3) agree the proposals for utilising the revenue balance within the Town Centre Legacy Fund.**

Cyber Incident 15
Update

With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress following the cyber-attack on the Comhairle's IT systems. The costs associated with the recovery process were detailed in the Report and it was noted that spend to date (2023/24 and 2024/25) on cyber security and new systems and/or rebuild costs had been calculated with one-off costs at £648k and on going costs associated with upgraded systems and cloud hosting at £394k. The Report stated that the Scottish Government had provided some in kind assistance in the immediate recovery phase through their cyber resilience team and the Chief Executive had received welcome notification that the Comhairle was to receive £250k funding from the Scottish Government towards the direct costs incurred.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle notes the update on recovery from the cyber-attach on the Comhairle's systems on 7 November 2023.

Community Care 16
Services: Fees and
Charges 2025/26

With reference to item 16 of the Minute of Meeting of 29 November 2023 the Head of Partnership and Community Care submitted a Report which sought approval for the setting of charges for Comhairle Community Care Services delegated to the Integration Joint Board for the financial year 2025/26. The Report stated that the Comhairle would continue to follow CoSLA guidance on charges and the Report outlined that the framework of charges for 2025/26 were based on full cost recovery. It was further stated that the charges set out in the Report were the maximum charge for each service and did not translate into the amount that all individuals would pay towards their care.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle approve the fees and charges for 2025/26, as follows:

- (1) the standard weekly charge for Comhairle care homes for the elderly increase from £1,912 to £2,008 per individual room per week;**
- (2) the standard weekly charge for Housing with Extra Care (HWE) at Bremner Court, Goathill, Stornoway increase from £1,108 to £1,163 per individual flat per week;**

- (3) the standard weekly charge for Ardseileach Care Home be increased from £2,649 to £2,781 per individual room per week;
- (4) the 2025/26 fee for residential assessment and respite (currently £177.35 per week) be increased by the percentage increase in pension credit (4.1%) to £184.60 per week;
- (5) the rates for the independent care homes for 2025/26 would be reported to the June 2025 series of meetings.
- (6) the meal provision charges for Day Care and other community-based service users be increased by 5% to £0.91 for tea/coffee and £3.76 per meal for lunch or a cooked meal;
- (7) the room hire and other facilities related charges be increased by 5%; and
- (8) the hourly rate for direct payments be £19.34 for one-to-one personal care, £39.72 and £79.45 for the half-day to full-day rate for Day Care equivalent for adults with learning disabilities depending on assessment which is in line with the Scottish Government's Adult Social Care Pay Uplift for Personal Assistants (4.5%).

Replacement of 17
Cleansing Vehicles

The Head of Municipal Services submitted a Report seeking homologation for the purchase of a precinct sweeper and authorisation to purchase replacement Cleansing Service vehicles and equipment through Asset Rental Borrowing or leasing. The Report stated that Cleansing and Waste Management related duties required reliable vehicles to ensure efficient service delivery. Some of these vehicles had reached the end of their useful working life or had component issues rendering them unsuitable for use.

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

- (1) homologate the decision of the Chief Financial Officer to approve the replacement of hired precinct sweeper, direct from Aebi Schmidt, at a cost of £85k, funded through the current Asset Rental agreements from within the Cleansing Services Trading Operation budget;
- (2) the replacement of refuse collection vehicle VX63 HBC, either by leasing or funded through the current Asset Rental agreements from within the Cleansing Services Trading Operation budget; and
- (3) rebody the inoperable refuse collection vehicle (MJ72 YRZ), if viable and cost effective, with a suitable body and bin lifts if funding is available and agreed with the Chief Financial Officer.

Employee 18
Engagement
Survey Results
2024

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided details of the 2024 Employee Engagement Survey results. The Report stated that the aim of the survey was to focus of identifying and exploring employee's experiences of working for the Comhairle to find better ways of working for the Comhairle in order to find better ways of working and drive service improvements. A total of 729 questionnaires had been completed and returned, representing a response rate of 35%.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the results of the fifth Employee Engagement Survey undertaken in 2024.

Reports Outstanding: Progress	19	With reference to item 17 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 February 2025 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which outlined the Reports Outstanding arising from decisions of the Committee.
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It was agreed to note the Report.

PRIVATE ITEMS

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of the following:

Items 20 and 22 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6,8 and 9 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 would be disclosed, namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle), the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Comhairle under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services and 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.

Item 21 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 would be disclosed, namely, information relating to the adoption, care, fostering or education of any particular child or relating to the supervision of residence of any particular child in accordance with a **supervision** requirement made in respect of that child under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 would be disclosed.

Islands Deal Growth Programme Reset – Outer Hebrides	20*	With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024 the Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report which provided an overview of the work undertaken as part of a portfolio review of the Outer Hebrides Islands Growth Deal and sought approval for proposals for change arising from the work. A variety of responses had been undertaken to support the review process and options had been considered and discussed with key partners.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) agree the Islands Growth Deal Programme Reset as outlined at Appendix 1 of the Report;**
- (2) agree to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration, in consultation with the Comhairle’s representatives on the Islands Deal Joint Committee, to agree the final detail of the Programme Reset, with UK and Scottish Government; and**
- (3) agree that, based on feedback from UK and Scottish Government, Islands Deal Programme funding which is freed up through this process should be made available elsewhere in the Programme to reduce match funding dependency and enable projects to proceed.**

Residential Placements for Children and Young People	21*	With reference to item 18 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 February 2025 the Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed the position with regard to Specialist Residential Placements for children and young people and of the budgetary implications arising from these placements.
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It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee’s interests were concerned, to that the Comhairle note the financial position for specialist residential provision for 2025-25.

Barra and Vatersay 22*
Community
Campus - Update

With reference to item 19 of the Minute of Meeting of 5 February 2025 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project.

The Report detailed the findings of the recently commissioned Developed Study which included a site options appraisal. The Report also noted the operational and political challenges the Project faced and suggested an operational and political strategy for advancing the Project.

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

- (1) notes the advice and professional assessments contained in the Report and the Developed Study; and**
- (2) agrees that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Elected Members of the Project Board, implements the operational and political strategies set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 5.7-5.10 of the Report.**