



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Tuesday, 26
November 2024 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

Mr Donald F Crichton (Chair)	Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Norrie MacDonald (Vice-Chair)	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Paul Steele	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Kenny M Macleod	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Robert Mackenzie	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Angus Morrison	Dr Frances Murray
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald	
Mr John Norman Macleod	

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Iain M Macleod	Mr George Murray
Mr Paul Finnegan	Mr Finlay M Stewart
Mr Ranald Fraser	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mrs Shona Hadwen
Mrs Anne Murray	Mr Fiona Maciver
Mr John Cunningham	Mrs Dolina Macleod
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr Iain Kennedy
Mr Sandy Gomez	Ms Isabel MacLachlan
Mr Iain Watson	Ms Catriona McCuish
Mr Colin G Morrison	Mr Niall Houston
Ms Ashley Ferrier	Mrs Katie Macaskill
Mr Kevin Murphy	

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Mr Angus Morrison

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 18 June 2024	1	The Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 2024 was approved .
Minute of Meeting of Housing Sub- Committee of 8 October 2024	2	The Minute of the Meeting of 8 October 2024 was noted .
Declaration of Interest	3	There were no declarations of interest.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Economic and Community Regeneration – Outcome Delivery Report 4

The Chief Officer, Economic & Community Regeneration submitted a Report presenting the half-year progress of the 2024/25 Strategic Priorities for the Economic & Community Regeneration Service detailing an update on key areas of strategic risk, including progress on the strategic outcomes and the resources identified to implement the business plan.

The Report stated that the Business Plan was aligned to three strategic priorities and progress on the outcome delivery plans were detailed in the body of the Report. The Report concluded that The Economic and Community Regeneration Service had maintained good controls on business planning and governance during the first two quarters of 2024 / 25. In addition to its core functions and responsibilities, key tasks include working to review, update and implement the Comhairle’s Corporate Strategies and political priorities while delivering a strong set of services on behalf of the community across a broad service portfolio and seeking to take best advantage of new and emerging economic opportunities.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle notes the half-year progress of the 2024/25 Departmental Outcome Delivery Plans.

HERITAGE

Heritage Services Update 5

The Team Leader, Heritage and Culture submitted a Report to update the Comhairle on progress towards the Museum Service Accreditation Return, museum income generation and the Archaeology Service.

The Report stated that the Heritage Service consists of the Museum Service, Archive Service and the Archaeology Service. Museum nan Eilean operates two accredited museums, both with changing exhibition programmes for diverse audiences. Its remit also includes caring for and conserving collections. In March 2024, the Accreditation status of both museums was reduced by Museum Galleries Scotland to Provisional Accreditation for 12 months, principally as a result of the effects of the cyber-attack on the service. The need for suitable staffing levels in line with national standards for the delivery of a museum service was also highlighted. Responses to, or resolution of, actions identified by the Accreditation Panel must be reported to Museums Galleries Scotland by March 2025. Progress so far is detailed at section 7 of the report.

The Report further stated that progress has been made on the actions required to regain full Museum Accreditation following the effects of the cyber-attack. However, budget availability impacts on the capacity of the service to fully meet the Museum Accreditation scheme requirements.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agrees to note:

- (1) progress on the actions required to regain full Museum Accreditation following the cyber-attack;**
- (2) current and anticipated pressures on the Archaeology Service; and**
- (3) the increased income generated through donations and shop sales by the Museum Service.**

HOUSING

Additional Council Tax Income from Second Homes (ACTISH) 6

The Chief Planning Officer submitted a Report to agree the proposed allocation of Additional Council Tax Income from Second Homes (ACTISH) to support the delivery of the Comhairle’s Housing service.

The Report stated that in addition to use of the operational Housing revenue budget, the Comhairle can support the delivery of its Housing service through income received from Council Tax charges on second homes. This income is known as ACTISH and all Local Authorities have the ability to support a range of housing initiatives from this source.

The Report further stated that income raised through ACTISH had been in excess of £469k per annum over the last few years. The report proposed that ACTISH receipts for the three-year period 2024-27 be allocated to a range of identified Housing initiatives, ensuring that the main objectives of the Comhairle’s Local Housing Strategy continue to be delivered.

The proposed allocation was similar to the ACTISH allocation agreed by the Comhairle for the previous three-year period.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approves the proposed allocation of Additional Council Tax Income from Second Homes for the period 2024/25, 2025/26 and 2026/27 as was detailed in 6.1 of the Report.

FISHERIES

Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas Consultation 7

The Chief Officer, Economic & Community Regeneration submitted a Report seeking homologation of the Comhairle’s response to the Scottish Government consultation on fisheries management measures within the Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas, which closed on 14 October 2024.

The Report stated that on 19 August 2024 Scottish Government opened a consultation seeking views on proposals for management measures to the Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in the Scottish offshore region, in addition to an amendment to the West of Scotland MPA boundary.

The Report further stated that the consultation was in two sections - part one concerned proposed fisheries management measures for 20 MPAs within the Scottish offshore region and sought views on documents which provided the rationale, evidence, and assessed potential impacts of the proposals. The second part related to the proposed amendment of the site boundary for the West of Scotland Nature Conservation MPA in order to resolve an issue with the original site boundary designation.

The Comhairle’s response to the consultation was appended to the Report and it was proposed that the Comhairle’s response be homologated, given that the consultation closing date preceded the current committee series.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agrees to homologate its response to the Scottish Government Consultation, as appended to the Report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Regional Economic Strategy 8

The Chief Officer, Economic & Community Regeneration submitted a Report seeking approval of the HIREP Strategy, and of a proposed update to the Outer Hebrides Economic Strategy.

The Report stated that the Scottish Government had sought to establish Regional Economic Partnerships (REPs) across Scotland. REPs seek to bring regional interests together to help drive economic growth through the alignment of resources and through collaboration between Government, agencies, academia and the private sector. Since 2021, the Comhairle has participated in the Highlands and Islands REP (HIREP).

The Report further stated that HIREP partners had developed a Regional Economic Strategy (Appendix 1) which articulated a shared 10-year vision for the Highlands and Islands, responding to the once in a generation opportunity presented by a just transition to net zero, and the resulting wider opportunities for businesses and communities. It also recognised the enabling infrastructure, assets and services which would be critical to realising collective ambitions.

Individual HIREP members were now seeking approval of the Regional Economic Strategy through their own governance processes. It was also proposed to update the Outer Hebrides Economic Regeneration to align with the HIREP Strategy, the Scottish Government’s National Strategy for Economic Transformation, and the Comhairle’s Corporate Strategy 2022-27. This would also reflect the need to respond to challenges and opportunities within the current economic context. A broad outline of the proposed direction of travel was detailed at Appendix 1.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) approve the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Strategy at Appendix 1; and**
- (2) agree to a refresh of the Outer Hebrides Economic Strategy as outlined at Appendix 2.**

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 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle).

Lews Castle Lease 9*

The Chief Officer, Economic & Community Regeneration submitted a Report to provide an update on rental and related financial aspects of the Lewis Castle lease.

The Report stated that in October 2016 a lease for Lews Castle was signed between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, NA Lews Castle Limited and Natural Assets Investments Limited, although the date of entry was 14 July 2016.

The Report further stated that rental payment was based on EBITDA (Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization), with annual rental being an amount equal to 10% of EBITDA. Members received an update in June 2023 confirming that because of a return to a more normal trading pattern, the Comhairle had received £21,299 rent for year ended December 2021 and £7,246 for year ended December 2022. It was agreed that an annual overview report be provided to Members to update on rental and related financial aspects of the Lews Castle lease.

A copy of the accounts to year ending December 2023 had been provided by Together Travel. This indicated that a loss was made during the period to end December 2023. Due to the nature of the arrangement with the company, there will be no rent income for 2023.

Comhairle Officers had met with the operator on 12 September 2024. It was confirmed by the operator that they were anticipating return to profit in 2024 due to changes in business rates, which would result in some rent being due to the Comhairle. It was noted that the break point for the lease is 14 July 2026. That break point may present an opportunity for the Comhairle to renegotiate the lease with a view to maximising the Comhairle's financial return from the Castle operation.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) notes the update on rental and related financial aspects of the Lews Castle lease;**
- (2) agree that, depending on the income generated in previous years, the Comhairle examine options in relation to the Lews Castle lease at the July 2026 break point, with a view to maximising the Comhairle's financial return from the Lews Castle operation; and**
- (3) agree to invite the Chief Financial Officer of Together Travel to a future meeting of the Committee.**

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports
Outstanding

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The Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report detailing those Reports outstanding arising from decisions of the Committee.

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

