



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Thursday 15
February 2024 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr George Murray
Mr John A Maciver	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Jack Libby
Mr Calum Iain Maciver	Mr Derek Mackay
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr James Mackinnon
Mr David Macleod	Mrs Marina Macaulay
Mrs Emma Macsween	

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Mr Gordon Murray.

Tribute: Mrs Celia Macsween

The Convener referred to Celia Macsween, Attainment Worker at Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath and Balivanich Primary Schools and sister-in-law of Cllr Mustapha Hocine, who passed away suddenly on Saturday 3 February 2024 in North Uist.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Celia's family, friends and colleagues at this very sad time.

Tribute: Mr Calum Iain Maciver

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mr Calum Iain Maciver, Depute Chief Executive, on the death of his mother.

Tribute: Mr Iain Macaskill, OBE

The Convener referred to Mr Iain Macaskill, OBE, (MacAsgaill a'Bhuird) who had passed away on 11 December 2023. Mr Macaskill was a former secretary of the Highlands and Islands Development Board and Chair of the Crofters Commission and had been awarded the OBE in 2021 for services to crofting and the Highlands.

The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended sincere condolences to Mr Macaskill's wife, Jean, children, Alistair, Jean and John and the wider family and friends.

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR: 15 FEBRUARY 2024

Tribute: Mr Alasdair MacGillivray	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, paid tribute to Mr Alasdair MacGillivray, former Headteacher of Balivanich School, who had passed away recently.</p> <p>On behalf of the Comhairle, the Convener extended sincere condolences to Mr MacGillivray's wife, Annie, son Seoras, and the wider family, friends, colleagues and former pupils.</p>
Tribute: Mr Alex A Macdonald	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle extended sincere condolences to former Comhairle Convener, Mr Alex A Macdonald, and his wife Morag, whose son Calum had passed away suddenly.</p>
Tribute: Mr Norman A MacDonald	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Norman A MacDonald, former Convener, who had been awarded an OBE in the King's New Years Honours List for his outstanding contribution to the community of Uig, to local government and the Western Isles.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf the Comhairle, congratulated Mr MacDonald on this well deserved award.</p>
Tribute: Mrs Malina Macleod	<p>The Convener referred to Mrs Malina Macleod, Lochportain, North Uist, who had been awarded an MBE in the King's New Years Honours List in recognition of her dedicated career in Nursing and Social Care.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mrs Macleod on this well deserved award.</p>
Tribute: Mrs Catherine (Catriona) Maciver	<p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Ms Catherine (Catriona) Maciver from Swordale, Point, now living in Bar Buidhe Care Home, who had recently celebrated her 100th Birthday.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, extended congratulations and best wishes to Ms Maciver.</p>
Tribute: Scotland's Regeneration Forum SURF Awards: Goathill Project	<p>The Convener referred to all those involved in the Goathill Project, which had won a Housing and Regeneration Award from Scotland's Regeneration Fund (SURF), which recognised projects that had been planned and delivered in a way which produced substantial, lasting benefits to communities and contributed to wider regeneration.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Dan Macphail, and all those involved in the design of the Goathill Project on this Award.</p>
Tribute: Highlands and Islands Media Awards	<p>The Convener referred to Mr Iain MacInnes, BBC Scotland's Senior Journalist for the Highlands and Islands, who had won the Diageo Journalist of the Year Award at the Highlands and Islands Media Awards. Mr MacInnes had also won the Jim Love Memorial Trophy for Reporter of the Year and the Highland Tourism Environment and Sustainability Reporter of the Year Award.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr MacInnes on his Awards.</p> <p>The Convener referred to Mr Eric Mackinnon, Stornoway Gazette, who had been the first recipient of the new Bill McAllister Memorial Trophy for Sports Writer of the Year at the Highlands and Islands Media Awards.</p> <p>The Convener, on behalf of the Comhairle, congratulated Mr Mackinnon on this Award.</p>

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting
of 7 December
2023

1

The Minute of Meeting of 7 December 2003 was **approved**.

Arising out of consideration of the Minute, Mr John Norman Macleod referred to the supplementary question which he had asked at the meeting and stated that he had not received a response to this question.

The Chief Officer, Education, Skills and Children's Services gave an assurance to Mr Macleod that he would respond to his question at the earliest opportunity.

Declaration of
Interest

2

There were no declarations of interest.

QUESTIONS

Written Questions
to the Convener
and Chairmen of
Committees

3

The following written question was submitted by Mr Calum Maclean:

"At last week's Education Committee meeting there was a debate on the recent HMIE Report on The Nicolson Institute. At that meeting, I asked what the term VC stood for within the Report and was informed that it meant Virtual Comparator. Would you say that Anderson High School in Shetland was a Virtual Comparator for The Nicolson Institute".

The Convener responded as follows:

A Virtual Comparator (VC) is, by definition, a virtual cohort of pupils used for comparison purposes and is not comparable with any other actual school. VC is a methodology used for schools to allow for an analysis of comparative performance, usually in attainment, and it is created by using the demographics of the particular school to match learners with the same characteristics from across the nation to create a 'virtual' school that is as close as possible to the one being compared. It is not possible to use a VC to draw meaningful comparison between The Nicolson Institute and Anderson High or any other specific school in Scotland. You can only compare a school to its own virtual comparator.

The Convener asked Mr Maclean if he had a supplementary question.

Mr Calum Maclean responded as follows:

The Scottish Government produces attainment figures for Secondary Schools and in that they produce a table that itemises Schools that have dropped 50 places over a period of time (that time limit is about 5 or 6 years). The comparator table compares Schools that have 5+ Highers in their leaving cohort and the three Western Isles Schools are found in the bottom ten. In view of that data and the three last HMIE Schools that have been inspected having Weak, Satisfactory and Good, that along with what we hear about teaching morale, do you think that we should be concerned about how education has changed in our islands over the past few years?

The Convener informed Mr Maclean that he would get a response to his supplementary question, in due course.

The following written question was submitted by Ms Susan Thomson:

“Would the Convenor provide an update on the Major Projects Forum, its work, scope, membership, and information on what the Comhairle’s role is and how and to whom it reports?”

The Convener responded as follows:

“Over the next decade there will be an unprecedented level of renewable energy investment in the Outer Hebrides, which will include:

- a 1.8GW HVDC interconnector, sub-station and supporting infrastructure to be constructed by Scottish and Southern Energy Networks;
- depending on final build-out, circa 450MW of terrestrial on-shore wind;
- depending on the achievement of relevant consents and final build-out, circa 2.8GW of Offshore Wind;
- construction of a “Net Zero” green hydrogen production hub(s)

This will represent the largest ever private sector investment into the Outer Hebrides and will coincide with a further series of investments, such as the activity being delivered through the Islands Growth Deal and Levelling Partnership by the UK and Scottish Governments.

The initial membership of the Major Development Forum comprises of:

- the key renewable energy developers
- Scottish and Southern Energy Networks
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- University of the Highlands and Islands

Other bodies may be asked to join the Forum as the process matures, as activity dictates and as a workplan develops.

The Forum is a Technical Officer Working Group that seeks to implement agreed Comhairle policy. It is chaired by the Comhairle (Depute Chief Executive) and will report to the Sustainable Development Committee as required.”

The Convener asked Ms Thomson if she had a supplementary question.

Ms Thomson responded as follows:

Could we have a Report to the next series of meetings on this matter?

The Convener confirmed that a Report would be submitted on this matter, at the earliest opportunity.

COMMITTEES

Budget and Strategy Board: Membership

4

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the membership of the Budget and Strategy Board, following the appointment of Dr Frances Murray as the new leader of the SNP Group.

It was agreed to confirm the appointment of Dr Frances Murray, SNP Group Leader, to the Budget and Strategy Board.

Committee Decision Reports

5

The following Committee Decision Reports were approved:

- (a) Education, Sport and Children’s Services Committee – 6 February 2024

Mr Paul Finnegan, seconded by Mr Paul Steele, moved approval of the Education and Children's Services Committee Decision Report of 6 February 2024.

Mr Gordon Murray, seconded by Mr Calum Maclean, moved the following amendment in respect of item 4 of the Decision Report:

"That the council agree that:

- (1) the lower floor of St Lennan's be used as the Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose subject to the Chief Executive/Chief Social Work Officer committing to a process of formal consultation with the current organisations/users utilising the much-valued ground floor of the St Lennan's centre, as regards any process formulated by the Chief Social Work Officer on the venue proposed by him for future use of the St Lennan's centre;
- (2) the Chief Executive/Chief Social Work Officer advise all members of the Comhairle, in writing, of the outcome of the consultation with the current organisations/users utilising the ground floor of the St Lennan's centre; and
- (3) in taking this decision, the Comhairle fully recognises the need to maximise any grant monies made available by the Scottish Government for the establishment of an Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose whilst at the same time taking full account of the needs and requirements of current organisations/users of the ground floor of the St Lennan's centre.

Mr Paul Finnegan and Mr Paul Steele indicated that they were happy to accept the amendment as an addition to the recommendations at item 4 of the Decision Report.

- (b) Sustainable Development Committee – 6 February 2024
- (c) Transportation and Infrastructure Committee – 7 February 2024
- (d) Policy and Resources Committee – 7 February 2024
- (e) Audit and Scrutiny Committee – 8 February 2024