



## COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

### POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Offices, ,  
Council Offices, Stornoway on Wednesday 5  
February 2025 at 2.00pm.

#### PRESENT

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

#### MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Iain M Macaulay
Mr Mustapha Hocine	Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr John Norman Macleod	Mr Finlay M Stewart
Mr Donald Macsween	

#### OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Calum Mackenzie
Mr Norman Macdonald	Mr Dan Macphail
Mr Donald Macleod	Mr Sandy Gomez
Ms Norma Skinner	Mr Derek Mackay
Mrs Ann Murray	Mr Colin George Morrison
Mr David Macleay	Mr James Mackinnon
Mr Colm Fraser	Mrs Marina Macaulay

#### Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer, led by Mr Duncan MacInnes.

The Chairman ruled items 5, 6, 7, 19 & 20 as urgent to allow the matters to be considered prior to the next meeting of the Comhairle.

#### MINUTES

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| Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024                                   | 1 | The Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 was <b>approved</b> .   |
| Declaration of Interest   | 2 | Mr Iain M Macleod, Mr Kenneth M Macleod and Mr Finlay M Stewart declared an interest in item 13 as they were Council representatives on Tighean Innse Gall and left the meeting during consideration of the matter. |
| Minute of Meeting of Budget and Strategy Board of: (a) 19 December 2024 | 3 | The Minutes of Meeting of the Budget and Strategy Board of 19 December 2024 and 23 January 2025 were <b>noted</b> .   |

(b) 23 January  
2025

Minute of Meeting of Community Safety Board of 29 January 2025 4

The Minute of Meeting of the Community Safety Board of 29 January 2025 was **noted** and the **recommendations at item 4 were recommended for approval.**

Arising out of consideration of this item, it was indicated that an up-to-date position on the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy would be reported to the next meeting of the Community Safety Board.

Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 30 January 2025 5

The Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 30 January 2025 was **noted.**

Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 4 February 2024 6

The Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 4 February 2024 was **noted** and the **recommendations at item 6 were recommended for approval.**

#### FINANCE

Second Quarter Revenue Monitoring 7

With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Chief Financial Officer detailed the Comhairle's forecast revenue outturn for 2024/25. A summary of the financial performance to the end of September 2024 was appended to the Report.

The Report stated that the Comhairle had an estimated £4m of reserves available to support the budget process. The current Budget Strategy for 2025/26 proposed the use of £2m to enable a balanced budget to be set and this left £2m to support future budgets and this required to be considered in the context of an increasing deficit position, the continued uncertainties around the Settlement and future pay awards and a substantial deficit within IJB Budgets.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the financial performance to date;**
- (2) approve the ring fencing of planning income as detailed in Appendix 3 to the Report;**
- (3) approve the reallocation of unspent Year 2 Crown Estate to the Islands Deal Projects as detailed in Appendix 3 to the Report; and**
- (4) approve the allocation of the Assets and Infrastructure carry forward from 2023/24 as detailed in Appendix 3 to the Report.**

Third Quarter Capital Monitoring 8

With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which provided an update on the progress of the 2023-28 Capital Programme as at 31 December 2024. The Report stated that projects totalling £28.2m had been carried forward from the 2018-23 Capital Programme and the delivery of these projects was ongoing, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the capital expenditure as at 31 December 2024 as detailed at Appendix 1 of the Report; and**

			<p><b>(2) approve the allocation of £400k of uncommitted General Capital Grant to Roads Maintenance, in lieu of a reduction in the revenue budget in 2025/26.</b></p>
Capital Strategy 23-28: Update	9		<p>With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 24 April 2024 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which detailed the updated Capital Strategy for 2023-28 and gave a high level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribution to the provision of services, along with an overview of how associated risk was managed and the implications for future financial stability. The Appendix to the Report detailed the Comhairle's Strategy for 2023-28, within the context of the 2023-28 Capital Programme, which will be updated annually.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Capital Strategy 2023-28 appended to the Report.</b></p>
Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26	10		<p>With reference to item 15 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which proposed the Borrowing and Investment Strategies for 2025/26 and the estimated Prudential Indicators for 2025/26. The Report fulfilled the Comhairle's legal obligations under the Local Government Scotland Act 2003 and incorporated the required Borrowing and Investment Strategies and took into account the outlook for interest rates, the Comhairle's current treasury position and the Prudential Indicators the Comhairle was required to set for the next three years to ensure that total capital investment remained within sustainable limits.</p> <p><b>It is recommended that the Comhairle approve the:</b></p> <p><b>(1) Investment Strategy, set out in Section 8 of the Report be approved;</b></p> <p><b>(2) Borrowing Strategy, set out in Section 9 of the Report be approved;</b></p> <p><b>(3) Prudential Indicators, detailed in Sections 11.2 and 11.4 of the Report.</b></p>
Transformational Plan Proposals	11		<p>The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval to progress a plan for transformation projects across the Comhairle. Appendix 1 to the Report provided examples of projects undertaken to highlight the significant work that had already taken place. The Report proposed that several cross cutting projects be undertaken running alongside continuous improvement within services and each project, if approved, would be led by a Chief Officer, a business case would be developed and presented to the Budget and Strategy Board for consideration.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve, subject to the development of full business cases, the three Transformation Projects detailed in paragraph 7 of the Report.</b></p>
UK Government Structural Funding	12		<p>The Chief Executive and Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report which sought approval of the utilisation of the Comhairle's Shared Prosperity Funding for 2025/26 and provided an update on the Community Renewal Partnership with the UK Government. The Report stated that funding has been allocated based on a Local Investment Plan, developed by the Comhairle and agreed with UK Government, with the requirement being for activity to be aligned with local priorities across the themes of communities and place, support for local businesses and people and skills.</p> <p><b>It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agrees to:</b></p> <p><b>(1) the proposals for the 2025/26 allocation of UK Shared Prosperity Funding as detailed at paragraph 7.2 of the Report;</b></p>

- (2) **the proposed approach to identifying the Comhairle's investment priorities for the Community Renewal Partnership with UK Government; and**
- (3) **delegate authority to the Chief Executive to allocate £90k Community Renewal Partnership capacity building funding to costs associated with the development and delivery of the Partnership.**

Crown Estate 13  
Revenues Round 6  
– Plan Island  
Distribution

With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2024 the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which detailed the proposed distribution of Round 6 of the Crown Estate Revenue funding to the Comhairle, which had increased by £245,365 to £1,865,365 from Round 5. The Report proposed that maximisation of impact and resource at ward level be achieved through a Comhairle Coastal Community Fund targeted at community economic development and wealth building. The Scheme of Administration for the Fund was appended to the Report.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) **notes that the Budget and Strategy Board has recommended to Policy and Resources Committee that Crown Estate funding contribute to the core Comhairle budget;**
- (2) **agree the option for strategic allocation of Round 6 Crown Estate Funding proposed at 7.6 of the Report; and**
- (3) **agree to the proposals for a ward-level Coastal Community Fund, including the Scheme of Administration at Appendix 1 of the Report.**

Budget Strategy 14  
Update 2025/26

This item was withdrawn.

## HUMAN RESOURCES

Amendment to 15  
Employee Expenses  
Rates

With reference to item 17 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2024 the Chief Executive sought approval to amend the employee expenses rates for overnight accommodation with friends and family. The Report stated that the maximum allowable rate which employees could claim for overnight accommodation with friends and family was decreased in error from £40 to £30 and it was proposed that this rate be amended back to £40.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve that the maximum allowable rate which can be claimed by employees for overnight accommodation with friends and family shall be £40.**

**RELATED MATTERS**

Comhairle @50	16	With reference to item 6 of the Minute of Meeting of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar of 2 October 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the Comhairle's plans to mark it's 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The Report stated that there were three main elements to marking the 50 <sup>th</sup> year of the Comhairle, with the first being a Civic Reception which was scheduled to take place in the Town Hall, Stornoway, on Friday 16 May 2025, with events also taking place in Uist and Barra. The second element was a publication to mark the Comhairle's work over the last 50 years, as well as looking ahead to the next 50 and the third being an expert panel discussion evening which was scheduled to take place later in 2025.
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**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the progress being made with the planned research work and themes to be covered in the publication;**
- (2) note that Karen Mackay Design has been contracted to assist with the design element of the publication;**
- (3) note that the Town Hall will be the venue for both the Civic Reception on Friday 16 May 2025 and the expert panel discussion evening later in 2025; and**
- (4) note that it is anticipated that the projected costs of the publication and Civic Events can be covered from 2024/25 and 2025/26 Civic Budget.**

**PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

Reports Outstanding: Progress	17	With reference to item 24 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 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.**

**Arising out of consideration of this item, it was noted that item 1, Island Fuel Tariffs would be removed from the Reports Outstanding as it had been reported to the Committee in November 2024.**

**PRIVATE ITEMS**

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 5 of Schedule 7A of 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 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.

Residential Placements for Children and Young People	18*	With reference to item 16 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 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.
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**It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle note 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 6, 8 & 9 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), 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.

Barra and Vatersay  
Community  
Campus – Update 19\*

With reference to item 17 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the progress of the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project.

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

#### URGENT ITEM

Council Tax on  
Properties under  
Repair – Policy  
Revision 20

With reference to item of the Minute of Meeting of the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which sought approval for a change to the Council Tax Empty Homes Policy, in relation to discounts on long term empty properties undergoing significant structural repair. It was stated in the Report that the discounts applied were dictated by the regulations and it was not intended as a complete review of the Policy. The proposed change addressed a specific issue which Members wished to be reviewed.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) agree that the Council Tax discount for properties under repair continue to be available for a period of up to 2 years in all cases, and that this be extended to 3 years for properties, where the Council Tax Payer encounters delays due to increased construction costs and contractor availability, and where they also intend to use the property as their home on completion; and
- (2) agree to amend the Policy with effect from 1 April 2024.