



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Wednesday 18
June 2025 at 2.00pm.

PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Mr Paul Finnegan
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Mustapha Hocine
Mr Iain M Macphail
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Rae Mackenzie

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr
Mr Donald Macleod
Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Tim Langley
Mr Sandy Gomez
Mrs Norma Skinner
Mr Derek Mackay
Mrs Marina Macaulay
Mrs Emma Macsween
Mr Dan Macphail
Mr Nick Fayers
Mrs Charlene Macmillan
Mrs Anne Murray
Mrs Carmen Macdonald
Mr Niall Houston

Prayer

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

MINUTES

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| Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 | 1 | The Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 was approved . |
| Declaration of Interest | 2 | Mr Iain M Macleod and Mr Kenneth M Macleod declared an interest as Board Members of Tighean Innse Gall and left the meeting during consideration of item 22. |
| Minute of Meeting of Local Government Employee Joint Consultative Committee of: | 3 | The Minutes of Meetings of the Local Government Employee Joint Consultative Committee of 20 March 2025 and 3 June 2025 were noted . |
| (a) 20 March 2025 | | |
| (b) 3 June 2025 | | |

Minute of Meeting of Budget and Strategy Board of 6 June 2025	4	The item was withdrawn. It was indicated that the Minute of Meeting of the Budget and Strategy Board of 6 June 2025 would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.
Minute of Meeting of Community Safety Board of 11 June 2025	5	The Minute of Meeting of the Community Safety Board of 11 June 2025 was noted and the recommendations at items 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 were recommended for approval.
Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 16 June 2025	6	The Minute of Meeting of Human Resources Sub-Committee of 16 June 2025 was noted.
Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 17 June 2025	7	The Minute of Meeting of Comataidh na Gàidhlig of 17 June 2025 was noted and the recommendations at items 4, 5 and 6 were recommended for approval.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Outcome Delivery Reports	8	With reference to item 8 of the Minute of Meeting of 27 November 2024 the Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer and the Head of Partnership Services and Community Care, submitted Reports which detailed progress on corporate policy matters and progress on the 2024/25 strategic priorities for the Chief Executive's Service, Strategic Finance and the Health and Social Care Directorate. Progress on the Outcome Delivery Plans were detailed in the Report.
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It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the Chief Executive's Department, Strategic Finance and Chief Officer, Partnership Services and Community Care Outcome Delivery Reports;**
- (2) note that the Chief Officer, Partnership Services and Community Care would circulate the Report which had been circulated to the Integration Joint Board in relation to delayed discharges; and**
- (3) agree that a Social Work and Social Care Board Seminar on Health and Social Care Services be arranged for all Members.**

Local Code of Corporate Governance 2025-	9	The Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on the implementation of the Local Code of Corporate Governance Action Plan and sought Comhairle approval for the Code of Corporate Governance and Action Plan 2025-26.
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The Report stated that there was a legal requirement for the Comhairle to put in place proper arrangements (known as the Governance Framework) for the governance of the Comhairle's affairs and to facilitate the exercise of its functions. This included setting the strategic direction, vision, culture and values of the Comhairle; the effective operation of corporate systems, processes and internal controls; engaging with and leading the community; monitoring where strategic objectives have been achieved and services

delivered cost effectively; and ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for the management of risk and that the Comhairle complies with the statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the draft Local Code of Corporate Governance 2024-25 and Action Plan 2025/26 at appendices 1 and 3 to the Report.

Capital
2024-25

Outturn

10

With reference to item 9 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2024 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which provided an update on the Capital Outturn for 2024-25. The Report stated that, since the initial programme had been set, a further £21.4m had been awarded to the Comhairle by the Scottish Government and other funders. It was further stated that projects totalling over £28.2m had been carried forward from the 2018-23 Capital Programme and the delivery of these projects was ongoing.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the capital expenditure as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

FINANCE AND STRATEGY

Revenue
2024/25

Outturn

11

With reference to item 10 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 the Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report which detailed the Comhairle's revenue outturn for 2024/25 and sought approval for the Departmental carry forwards. The Chief Financial Officer stated that the draft accounts for 2024/25 would be submitted to a special meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 26 June 2025 for approval, prior to submission to Audit Scotland.

A summary of the Comhairle outturn, which showed an indicative unaudited surplus of £1.9m was detailed in the Report. The Report stated that the carry forward rules permitted services to carry forward an over or underspend of up to 1% of their controllable budgets and all Departments were within tolerances. The proposed carry forwards were detailed in Appendix C to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2025;**
- (2) agree the carry forward of budgets as detailed in Appendix C to the Report;**
- (3) agree the specific carry forward for the Chief Executive's Department as detailed in Appendix C to the Report;**
- (4) agree the specific carry forward for Education, Skills and Children's Services as detailed in Appendix C to the Report;**
- (5) agree the Education, Skills and Children's Services carry forward as detailed in paragraph 7.22 of the Report;**
- (6) agree the Economic and Community Regeneration specific carry forward as detailed in Appendix C to the Report;**
- (7) agree the use of Economic and Community Regeneration previous years carry forward as detailed in paragraph 7.28 of the Report;**
- (8) agree the Assets and Infrastructure carry forward as detailed Appendix C to the Report; and**
- (9) agree the Assets and Infrastructure carry forward as detailed in paragraph 7.46 of the Report.**

Medium Term Financial Plan	12	The Chief Financial Officer submitted a Report concerning the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2025/26 - 2029/30 which had been developed using the budget for 2025/26 as the baseline for future projections for the five-year period to 2029/30. The Medium-Term Financial Plan highlighted indicative gaps in the available budget over the years and included a range of scenarios based on differing planning assumptions, using information currently available relating to public sector pay policies, inflation and CPI measures, as well as making assumptions on differing levels of funding which may be available to the Comhairle over the period.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Medium-Term Financial Plan, recognising that the figures therein are indicative and will be updated as part of the budget setting process.

Community Services – Fees and Charges 2025/26 and 2026/27	13	With reference to item 16 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 the Chief Officer, Partnership Services and Community Care submitted a Report which sought approval for setting of charges for independent care homes as part of the Comhairle Community Care services delegated to the Integration Joint Board (IJB) for the financial years 2025/26 and 2026/27. The Report stated that, following extended negotiations, the IJB and the externally commissioned care home and nursing home providers had reached agreement on the financial arrangements for the current financial year and 2026/27. The agreement afforded both Leverburgh Care Home and Bethesda Nursing Home the opportunity to operate with beds available for private admissions, thus increasing the total income to be derived from their maximum bed capacity.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the independent care home charges as detailed below:

- (1) for 2025/26 a rate of £1,263 per bed per week will be the charge for Comhairle commissioned Bethesda Nursing Home placements;**
- (2) for 2026/27 a rate of £1,391 per bed per week will be the charge for Comhairle commissioned Bethesda Nursing Home placements;**
- (3) for 2025/26 a rate of £1,152 per bed per week be the charge for Comhairle commissioned Leverburgh Care Home placements; and**
- (4) for 2026/27 a rate of £1,268 per bed per week will be the charge for Comhairle commissioned Leverburgh Care Home placements.**

Non-Domestic Rates Discretionary Relief – Policy Revision	14	The Chief Financial Officer sought approval for amendments to the Non-Domestic Rates Relief Policy, regarding empty properties. The Report stated that, in February 2023, decisions on the award of Empty Property Relief had been devolved to local authorities and the Comhairle had agreed to adopt the provisions of the Government Empty Property Relief Scheme, pending a review after the first year of operation. The property categories currently in receipt of relief were detailed in the Report. The estimated costs of the Scheme in 2025/26 were £112k and the Budget included a saving of £40k, which was dependent on Members agreeing a revision to the Policy. The Policy revisions were considered by the Budget and Strategy Board on 6 June 2025 and the recommendations were based on the views from that meeting.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve:

- (1) the removal of Empty Property Relief except for properties subject to a winding up order under the Insolvency Act or where properties are the subject of a liquidation;**

- (2) that the exemption for the first 6 months that an industrial property is empty be retained at 50%, and that the 10% discount thereafter be removed;
- (3) that the relief for other properties, not covered by the listed categories, be set at 50% for the first 6 months, and that the 10% discount thereafter be removed; and
- (4) that the Policy revision be effective from 1 September 2025.

Respect at Work

15

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which detailed legislative changes relating to sexual harassment in line with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 and sought approval for the refreshed Respect at Work Policy. The Report stated that terminology in the existing Respect at Work Policy had been updated and additional information had been included. An internal online training course had been developed alongside the Respect at Work Policy to support employees understanding of their rights and responsibilities in relation to harassment, which would be mandatory for all Comhairle employees.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the legislative changes in relation to sexual harassment; and
- (2) approve the updated Respect at Work Policy.

Community Wealth
Building (Scotland)
Bill Consultation

16

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought homologation of a Comhairle response submitted to the Scottish Government's Consultation on the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill. The Report stated that the Bill proposed to:

- place a duty on the Scottish Ministers to publish a Community Wealth Building (CWB) Statement which would set out the measures they would take to facilitate the CWB.
- require local authorities and relevant public bodies to publish and implement a CWB Plan for their area.
- Require 'specified public bodies' to have due regard to CWB guidance when developing their corporate plans and associated delivery strategies.

The Comhairle's response to the Consultation was appended to the Report.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle homologate the response to the Scottish Government's consultation on the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Bill.

Digital
Transformation

17

With reference to item 16 of the Minute of Meeting of 25 September 2024 the Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure and Chief Officer, Law and Governance submitted a Report which provided an update on the Digital Transformation Project, which had been approved by the Comhairle in February 2025, with a view to improving data management and efficiency across the services. The Report stated that the Project also had the potential to realise cash savings should there be a reduction in the number of IT systems being used across the Comhairle. It was further stated that a Digital Strategy Focus Group has been established to progress Digital Transformation throughout the Comhairle and, following the initial meeting, a Digital Transformation Survey had been circulated to all Departments.

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

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British Sign Language Plan 2024-2030	Sign Plan	18	With reference to item 13 of the Minute of Meeting of 19 June 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report in respect of the British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-2030 and detailed progress with the actions within the Plan.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the British Sign Language Plan Progress Report, appended to the Report; and**
- (2) agree that Chief Officer's monitor the performance progress of their area of responsibility.**

Reports Outstanding: Progress	19	There were no reports outstanding.
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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	20*	With reference to item 21 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 the Chief Officer, Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report advising of 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, that the Comhairle notes the financial position for specialist residential provision for 2025-26.

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	21*	With reference to item 22 of the Minute of Meeting of 30 April 2025 the Chief Executive and Project Manager submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus Project.
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It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle notes:

- (1) the welcome announcement in the Programme for Government for 2025/26 that the Barra and Vatersay Campus Project will go ahead; and**
- (2) that a meeting with Scottish Government officials would take place in June 2025 to consider issues regarding delivery of the Project, including project governance, scope and funding mechanisms.**

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 of 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).

Housing
Investment
Borrowing Request

22*

The Chief Officer, Economic and Community Regeneration submitted a Report in relation to a request made by Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) for the Comhairle to use its borrowing powers to enable TIG to access funding for its housing development programme.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note that:

- (1) a request has been received from Tighean Innse Gall (TIG) requesting access to loan funding from the Comhairle to progress a number of strategic housing developments;**
- (2) discussions are ongoing with TIG regarding the exploration of other potential sources of funding, legal issues including subsidy control, assessment of TIG's organisational capacity to deliver a project or projects at this scale and conditions around disposal of properties; and**
- (3) a Special Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee and the Comhairle will be arranged once the Comhairle has obtained relevant financial and legal advice and the discussions with TIG have concluded, to allow assessment by the Comhairle of this request.**