

3. Accounts and Admin

3.1 PS reported that the current account balance was £2845.53 with invoices for £313 still to pay, giving a net credit balance of £2532.53. A few further bills were due before the end of the FY.

3.2 In a brief discussion about the use of Zoom for online meetings, it was agreed it would be sufficient in future to rely on the time-limited 'free' option, so the current subscription need not be renewed. ***Post-meeting update: it emerged that the subscription had already been auto-renewed until Feb 2024. Action: GS/PS to disable further auto-renewal before Feb 2024.***

3.3 The Ward Manager's office had asked for up-to-date contact details of CC members. ***Action: BS to collate and submit the information.***

3.4 The Scottish CCs Improvement Service had invited CCs to bid for free advice from the 'Scottish Tech Army' under a pilot scheme aimed at assisting in setting up and operating a CC website. BS had sent an initial response expressing NW&SCC's interest, and Nairn River CC was keen on a joint bid. AN suggested that there was scope to review and rationalise the various Nairn-related websites to ensure the delivery of consistent and positive messages. ***Action: await the response from the SCIS.***

4. Current planning/licensing applications

4.1 The McDermotts Road. NW&SCC had sent in comments and, as requested, copied to Councillors. Councillors have not yet expressed a view. **Cllr Oldham** noted that a public meeting is to take place in Ardersier with the port management on Wed 1 March.

4.2 Fort Reay. NW&SCC had submitted comments, and following local consultation had agreed supplementary comments. ***Action: further letter to be despatched [BS]***

4.3 The Grapemonger Consensus support for provisional licensing application, and welcome for expansion of High Street business. ***Action: BS to inform HC Licensing officer.***

4.4 Proposed IMFLDP. As agreed in the wake of the November Nairn Area Committee and in subsequent meetings with officials, NW&SCC and Nairn River CC had endorsed and supported the submission of supplementary material prepared by local businesses and their advisers on the designation of, and planning for, the 'Nairn East' site.

Action (already taken): NW&SCC letter confirming support for submission of additional material by Highland Council to the Government Reporter who would be examining the draft of the proposed new IMFLDP.

5. Parking scheme

5.1 The formal NW&SCC complaint submitted to HC CEO and Head of Legal Services had sought in particular withdrawal of the permit scheme and review of the motorhome arrangements, and had raised concerns about the conduct of the official responsible.

5.2 A reply had been received on 27 January. It had been sent by the Roads department which was the subject of the complaint, not the CEO or legal advisers, and it failed to address the issues raised. Local Councillors (who had endorsed the parking scheme) confirmed that they had not been consulted or informed by HC officials about the response. CC members commented that this was unacceptable. **Action: it was agreed that copies of the correspondence be passed to Councillors and a further letter be sent to the HC head of legal services. [JN]**

6. Spindrift planning advice

6.1 No reply had been received to the letter sent on 1 Dec 2022 seeking an explanation of the inconsistency of planning advice. A three-month delay was inexcusable. A chaser letter should not be necessary. Local Councillors were unaware of the matter.

Action: a reminder would be sent. [BS/JN]

7. New Academy plans

7.1 There was general disappointment that progress had stalled for lack of a funding allocation due in December under the Government LEIP arrangements. There was no revised timescale for this. It was generally agreed that political pressure was needed to raise the priority of the Nairn project. Councillors commented that the obstacle was at government level and was a budgeting issue which they did not feel able to influence.

7.2 **AH** suggested that one strategy to inject greater urgency would be to call for an independent Health and Safety review of the existing building: if it was declared unfit or unsafe, this would force the authorities to take urgent action. It was pointed out that the Council had already condemned the building as structurally unsatisfactory.

Action: NW&SCC to contact the HSE [AH]

7.3 Concern was raised again about the planned (700) capacity and the design of the new building. It would not be able to meet the demand from any new housing development, which should therefore not be permitted. **Cllr Jarvie** pointed to the challenges already posed by the growth of Tornagrain and the lack of capacity at Culloden.

Action: Councillors suggested that CCs and local citizens should write to their MSPs.

8. Future of Library

8.1 Questions were asked about the Council's policy on the future provision and location of Library services, and about the extent of HLH responsibility for library management and the outcome of the HLH survey.

8.2 There were differing views on the way forward. **Cllr Oldham** had supported the public call for retention of the existing library. **Cllr Fraser** believed that the aim was to relinquish the existing High Street leased premises (and also to dispose of other buildings – including the listed former school building occupied by HC Finance staff – which were 'surplus to requirements'). **PS**

commented that this could be a mistake: other organisations had sold off buildings, only to have to reinstate or replace them later at significantly higher cost.

8.3 AN reminded the meeting of the need for joined-up thinking. Giving up the High Street library building would mean also the loss of the Library car park and its 78 parking spaces. This would have repercussions for the viability and regeneration of the High Street and town centre.

Action: None. To be on agenda for next meeting.

9. Developer Contributions

9.1 Following questions raised by CCs in Nairn and elsewhere over the collection, accounting and disbursement of DC funds, proposals for reform of the process for allocation of DCs had been approved by the Council's E&I Committee. This included new arrangements which assigned a role to Area Committees to engage with local communities. The question was raised as to how this would be implemented in Nairn. **Cllr Oldham** requested that this be deferred to a future CC meeting when Cllr Green as Area Committee chair was in attendance.

Action: None. To be on agenda for a future meeting.

10. Vaccination policy

10.1 AN outlined the serious and adverse immediate and long term consequences for Nairn of the current shift in NHS policy on delivery of vaccinations. Pressure from the community and MSPs had so far had no effect. The sustainability of the current local health centre and GP practice could be at risk.

10.2 It was pointed out that Nairn's purpose-built modern facilities were vitally important, that local delivery was significantly more efficient and cost-effective than the latest NHS arrangements, and that local access for the elderly, families and the vulnerable was important to maintain take-up rates and 'herd immunity'.

10.3 Although the lead agency and provider of childrens' health and social care services, Highland Council had so far apparently made no public comment or statement, nor debated the implications of the current NHS approach. **Cllr Jarvie** referred to the existence of various expert committees. **Cllr Fraser's** comment – that *ad hoc* local clinics organised by NHS Highland might be sufficient – was not regarded as sensible or adequate. He sought advice on what change was being sought. The response was that there were two key requirements: that the delivery be "re-localised" to use the existing staff resources and health centre, and that the integration and continuity of healthcare services and records locally be maintained.

Action: AN would continue to pursue the matter with relevant professional contacts. Subject to be raised again at next meeting.

11. The A96 Bypass

11.1 It was agreed by all that the latest announcement by the Transport Minister was a severe setback and had demonstrated that government assurances were not credible. The A9 would have priority for any available funding. While the continuing lobbying by MSPs was welcome, and Fergus Ewing had continued to campaign, further slippage in the timeframe was now certain. Delivery of a dual-carriageway bypass for Nairn now seemed unlikely in the foreseeable future.

11.2 This prompted debate about what options were now worth pursuing. There was little support for continuing to press for a fully-dualed A96. **Cllr Jarvie** felt little could be done but wait: much depended on who took over as First Minister. **Cllr Fraser** had always favoured a less ambitious and less expensive single-lane bypass on the route now agreed and defined. **Cllr Oldham** was concerned that there might not even be funding for that, and suggested action in the meantime (such as a roundabout at the Lochloy Road junction) to alleviate the issues with the existing A96 through the town. This echoed the suggestion in earlier meetings that Nairn needed a “Plan B” based on the assumption that there would be no bypass.

Action: *None. No conclusion, no consensus, and no decision on public statement or campaign.*

12. The Town Centre

12.1 Councillors were asked for their views on the SPSO report and verdict, and about the action now proposed by the Council to address the issues which had been identified and ‘learn the lessons’. Councillors said that they had not seen or been consulted about the SPSO report (despite the findings having been notified to the Council in February 2022). So they could not comment.

Action: *None. To be raised again at the next meeting.*

13. Common Good

13.1 Recalling the long-standing commitment made some years ago, and reiterated at recent CC meetings, Councillors were asked for an update on the proposals to establish a local CG ‘engagement’ group. There was no information to report. Councillors were not able to outline the proposed arrangements. Nor could they indicate when the draft proposals might be available for discussion. **Cllr Fraser** thought that proposals might be considered by the Area Committee before any consultations took place.

13.2 CC members again suggested that – in line with the commitment to engagement and working together – major strategic decisions on CG matters, including both the use or disposal of assets eg the Grant Street site, and the significant commitment of CG expenditure on funding a new Council employee post, should be deferred until the new engagement group was established. **Cllr Oldham** said that Councillors would take note of the CC proposal. Members got the impression that it was likely to be denied.

13.3 It was pointed out that there were already precedents for local community engagement in CG management: in Dornoch the CC was directly involved in decision-making on their Common Good. **Cllr Oldham** argued that the Dornoch situation was not comparable because there was only one Highland Councillor living in the Dornoch area. [??]

Action: *None. Draft proposals still awaited. To be raised again at next meeting.*

14. Local Place Planning

14.1 **AN** reported that NICE directors had met Council officials including the Ward Manager and the new Project Manager (Ewen McIntosh). The outcome was that the officials would next meet and report back to the local Councillors. No decisions had yet been made on the allocation of funding, the engagement of outside consultants, or the future workplan.

14.2 **AN** and CC members commented on the lack of clarity around the role of the Nairn & Nairnshire Community Planning Partnership (NNCPP) and the possible involvement of other groups (eg the BID). In particular there was concern over the confusing recent message from an HIE official cancelling a meeting that had not actually been organised and of which no-one had been notified. **Cllr Jarvie** offered her views. **AN** again emphasised the importance of working together.

Action: *Dialogue between NICE and HC officials to continue.*

15. AOCB

15.1 Community Centre Manager. **JN** announced that the Centre Manager (Sam Morrison) would be retiring in March after having been in charge of the Centre since its opening in 2006. All agreed that she had done a superb job and had been helpful and supportive to all users of the Centre. **Action:** *it was unanimously agreed that NW&SCC should express its appreciation and record its thanks formally in the minutes.*

15.2 East Beach Car Park. **JN** thanked **Cllr Jarvie** for her interest in this subject. Requests had been made for signage to be put up in suitable places beyond the Maggot car park directing visitors to the East Beach car park, where there were 45 spaces, toilets, and accessible routes to the beach. **Cllr Jarvie** confirmed that the relevant official (Matt Johnson) was taking this forward. **Action:** *HC officials to install new signs. For agenda of next meeting – to confirm installation has been completed.*

15.3 New Area Police Commander. **Cllr Jarvie** said she had been impressed by the new appointee (Cdr Shepherd). The meeting noted her views. **Action:** *None.*

16. Next meeting

16.1 Joint meeting with Nairn River CC, 7.00pm Mon 20 March in the Community & Arts Centre.