

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Customer Services Board** held in Committee Room 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday, 19 August 2014 at 3.00 pm.

**Present:**

Mr D Millar

Dr I Cockburn

Mrs M Davidson

Mr J Gordon

Mr R Laird

Mr B Lobban

Mr H Morrison

Dr A Sinclair

Mr H Wood

**Non- Member in Attendance:**

Mr A Baxter

**Officials in attendance:**

Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development

Ms T Page, Customer Services Manager

Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager

**Mr D Millar in the Chair****Business****1. Apology for Absence**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs D Mackay.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

There had been circulated Minutes of the last Meeting held on 25 June 2014 - which were **APPROVED**.

**4. Exclusion of the Public**

The Board **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**5. Customer Service Review – Update**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. CSB/2/14 dated 19 August 2014 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which, with the recent consolidation of the key principles to be applied to the review, offered various options available for communities and reflected the principles applied.

In this regard, specific and detailed confidential information had been provided in relation to the work of the Board and the current position, key principles for the future model for customer service delivery, partnership opportunities, access points and associated financial implications.

There had also been tabled at the meeting individual Service Point Profiles for reference and information.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in terms of potential partnership opportunities, statistics had been provided in regard to the percentage of households across Highland which were within a 30 minute drive of either a Service Point Hub or a Library but further information was required in regard to the percentage of rural residents within these statistics;
- the final two pages of the report (contained as part of Appendix 3) should be removed as they had been included in error;
- the information which had been provided in regard to the potential for access points to be established was useful and should be used as a starting point for future discussions on the way forward;
- there was also a need for further discussion with High Life Highland in regard to those areas which were currently served by a Mobile Library and specifically an examination of potential routes, hours of service, etc for any new arrangements;
- it had to be recognised that Library opening hours varied across the Highlands and therefore one solution would not suit all communities;
- there were currently arrangements in place within specific locations for the sharing of services and examples of best practice should be followed wherever possible;
- the specific and detailed information which had been tabled in relation to individual Service Point Profiles was appreciated and would be extremely helpful in terms of future discussion;
- there was a need for further information on the potential for moving work to staff working from home or local locations as agreed at the last meeting;
- there should be a focus on the retention of jobs in rural areas wherever possible;
- it would be helpful if further information could be provided for the next meeting on the costs of running Service Points i.e. building costs, staff costs, etc;
- there was a need to take cognisance of recent feedback which had indicated that a large percentage of the public needed and would appreciate face-to-face help with transactions e.g. applications for benefits;
- consultation with Members, staff, trade unions and communities on any new proposals was imperative as it would allow the sharing of ideas and comments and there was a need for further information to come to the next meeting on proposals for how and when this would be undertaken; and
- inviting trade union representatives to attend the next meeting would be helpful in order to allow discussion to be undertaken at that time with Board Members.

Finally, and in regard to the proposed Key Principles to be applied, Members **AGREED** as follows:-

Principle 1 – one solution will not suit all communities and we need to look at each community to understand usage and opportunities for local service delivery.

Principle 2 – following a vote – it's about providing services not keeping buildings where appropriate, not assuming that the current Service Points are in the right location.

Principle 3 – need to offer a face-to-face point of contact for those who do not want to or can't use technology or for more complex enquiries.

Principle 4 – consider potential for moving work to staff working from home or local locations.

Principle 5 – adopting an appointment based Registration Service to enable a peripatetic service to replace a dedicated Registrar in certain locations.

Principle 6 – proposals for dealing with complex enquiries and confidential issues in an environment where there is not a dedicated Service Point e.g. Library, thinking about use of technology such as desktop VC to link to Officers in other locations.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated and **AGREED** to further work being undertaken with Schools and Police Scotland to ensure all opportunities were explored for communities.

It was also **AGREED** that, in addition to meeting with Trade Union representatives, the business of the next meeting should include the proposed approach to future consultation with Elected Members, staff and communities (including timescales), further information on the proposed Access Point model and the provision of more localised data in relation to the Service Point Profiles which had been tabled at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 4.30pm.