

Summary

This report invites Board Members to consider the potential sources of external input to the Redesign and to advise how they wish to engage in each case.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Members of the Council and the Board have emphasised the importance of external input to the work of the Redesign Board. The principal reason for this is to ensure that Board Members have access to a broad range of information, advice and experience related to organisational redesign. This will provide evidence for the evaluation of options and the subsequent development of recommendations which are considered the best fit for The Highland Council.
- 1.2 The consideration of information and experience from external sources will provide valuable insights into what has worked elsewhere.
- 1.3 The consideration of advice from external sources will ensure that the Board hears challenge to established practices and systems. The Board will be able to consider advice which encourages fresh thinking about purpose, value, staff deployment and partnership working. There is an opportunity to further address the recommendations of the Christie Commission, particularly in relation to prevention of demand for services.

2. Potential Sources of External Input

- 2.1 The timetable for the work of the Redesign Board will allow Members to consider a wide range of external contributions. This is best suited to the proposed Workshop sessions as these settings promote the exchange of ideas, discussion, problem solving, challenge and the development and testing of proposals.
- 2.2 Potential sources for the Board to consider include:-
 - Chief Officers and/or Senior Councillors from Local Authorities who have relevant experience of Redesign.
 - Representatives from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) – consultancy support from SOLACE Enterprises.
 - The Improvement Service (COSLA)
 - Current and former chief officers from our Public Sector Partners including Police Scotland, SFRS, NHS
 - Continuous Improvement Specialists such as LEAN Practitioners
 - Specialist private sector consultants
 - Visits or invites to exemplar organisations

- Attendance at Conferences

- 2.3 Of particular relevance to the work of the Board will be the experience of English Local Authorities. The funding of local government in England has been subject to earlier and deeper cuts than funding in Scotland. It is the case therefore that Councils south of the border have been engaged in redesign for around 5 years and there is a growing body of evidence about which approaches have been most effective for the communities they serve. It must be recognised that there are significant differences in funding, structure, scale and responsibilities to be taken into account in any comparison but it is anticipated that this will be a rich source of information for the Board.
- 2.4 The scale of the cuts in England has, in some cases, taken Councils beyond the review and redesign of their services and into a process of re-invention in which some Councils are considering a future focused on digital services and becoming an enabler rather than a deliverer of services within communities. It will be important to consider the context of such radical change to ensure that the Board considers evidence which is closely related to the Highland context.
- 2.5 SOLACE Enterprises are developing a proposal for consultancy support and it is expected that this will be available for the Board meeting. This is likely to involve recently retired Chief Executives of local authorities who can share their experience and offer analysis and advice related to our Redesign. In addition there are at least 2 Scottish Chief Executives with recent experience of similar roles in England who could be approached for support.
- 2.6 The Improvement Service works with Scottish councils and their partners to improve the efficiency, quality and accountability of local public services by providing advice, consultancy and programme support. Chief Executive Colin Mair has recently provided support to the Highland Community Planning Partnership.
- 2.7 Public Sector partners across the UK are facing similar financial challenges and many, such as Police Scotland will have valuable experience which can be related at local level.
- 2.8 LEAN is an effective tool used successfully worldwide to improve processes and eliminate waste. It is a central part of NHS Highlands "Highland Quality Approach" and is proven to be effective in improving outcomes and simultaneously reducing costs. There is an investment cost in terms of training and workshop time and the Board will wish to consider whether this is an approach suited to Highland Council redesign.
- 2.9 Council Members have previously expressed an interest in taking consultancy support from private sector specialists and there are many consultancies which are engaged in this area of work. This could provide a well-evidenced analysis of what can be achieved, where to focus and the methods most likely to be effective in the Highland context. The challenge will be to demonstrate value for money. The most effective consultancy projects are where the support is maintained through the implementation of change to ensure that it

is embedded and the benefits are fully realised.

2.10 Board Members may wish to visit, or to send officers to visit, exemplar organisations which have achieved sustained redesign and to learn from their experiences. Also invites to present information to the Board can be made.

2.11 My recent attendance at a conference in Manchester has been extremely useful in terms of enhanced knowledge and opportunities for future networking and follow-up of promising leads. Such attendances need to be carefully selected in terms of relevance and cost but Board Members will wish to consider such opportunities for themselves as part of their role in the Redesign Board.

3 Recommendations

3.1 Board Members are invited to consider and discuss these (and other) potential sources of external input to the work of the Redesign Board. Such inputs will be most valuable over the course of the next 3 months and Board Members are asked to advise how they wish to engage with these sources.

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