

The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum – Elected Members/Staff Side Group

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in the Leader's Meeting Room, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 2 November 2017 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Employer's Representatives:

Mrs Margaret Davidson
Mr Alasdair Christie

Mr Allan Henderson
Mr Alister Mackinnon

Staff Side Representatives:

Mr John Gibson (UNISON)
Mr Paul MacPherson (GMB)
Mr Rikki Selkirk (GMB)

Mr Donald Morrison (UCATT)
Mr Alister Wemyss (UNITE)
Ms Margaret Macrae (RCN)

In attendance:

Mr S Barron, Chief Executive
Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning Service
Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mr D Yule, Director of Corporate Resources
Mrs C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office
Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
Mr M MacDonald, HR Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Mrs M Davidson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith, Mr M Murphy and Ms L MacKay.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mrs M Davidson declared a financial interest as her son was an employee of The Highland Council but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion at the meeting.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 28 August 2017, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the Minutes, it was reported that:-

- Item 5.ii: Fiona Grant had been appointed as Attendance Officer;
- Item 5.iii: A briefing had been received and circulated from CoSLA on the 2017 Pay Award; and
- Item 9: The ResourceLink project was about supporting Workforce Planning and although the primary aim was to provide data reporting and analysis to enable more sophisticated Workforce Planning it would provide a number of other additional benefits such as establishment data, improved HR and payroll reporting, further efficiency and integration processes, and an improved experience for users of these systems. The project was being delivered through existing resources with a project team comprising representatives from HR, Payroll and Finance and data was being gathered through an extensive group of service users with the project being overseen by senior managers from Finance and HR. Although there was a planned delivery date of May 2018 this would be challenging but work was progressing well with project risks and issues being managed. It was requested that a briefing on this be circulated.

The Staff Partnership Forum **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that a briefing on ResourceLink be circulated.

5. Service Trade Union Liaison Meetings

There had been circulated the following Service Trade Union Liaison Minutes of Meetings for information:-

- i. Finance Service – 13 September 2017;
- ii. Care and Learning Service – 28 August 2017; and
- iii. Community Services – 26 May 2017 and 25 August 2017 (tabled).

Arising from the Minutes, it was reported that:-

- Finance Service: There had been no response from the Scottish Government on the Barclay Report and it was anticipated that this would be included within the budget announcement on 14 December 2017; and
- Community Services: Concern was expressed at the policy whereby Building Maintenance vans were not to be taken home and it was highlighted that this was increasing the volume of traffic at the Diriebught depot. In addition, previously staff would use their PDA to travel direct from home to their first place of work but now had to go to the depot to pick up a van and their carbon footprint was being increased as a result of this. However, the Director of Community Services explained that it had previously been agreed that if a business case was presented demonstrating the operational requirement for vans to be taken home then it could be continued. It was confirmed that an end of season report was currently being prepared on the grass cutting and toilet services that had been taken in-house and staff were commended for their efforts with this.

The Staff Partnership Forum **NOTED** the Minutes and the update provided.

6. Redesign of the Highland Council - Update

There had been circulated Report No. SPF/7/17 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

In regard to Staff Engagement and the submission of ideas, it was explained that staff could submit their ideas via the generic email address (redesign@highland.gov.uk) and it was requested that a dedicated email be circulated to all staff to remind them of this mechanism for submitting new ideas.

It was further suggested that, in addition to this, a briefing could be prepared on the staff local forum which had been held in Lochaber earlier in the week. It was highlighted that the engagement from staff at this meeting had been helpful, a number of opportunities were highlighted, and the enthusiasm to upskill was very encouraging.

Thereafter, the Staff Partnership Forum:

- i. **NOTED** the Trade Union involvement in the current peer reviews as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **AGREED** the new service areas for peer review be identified with criteria for peer reviews attached at Appendix 2 to the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the current programme of Lean reviews and identify any new areas for this type of review;
- iv. **NOTED** the opportunities for Trade Union involvement in the management briefings in September 2017 and in the local staff briefings running from the end of October to early December 2017 and the verbal feedback from the Fort William briefing provided at the meeting;
- v. **NOTED** that new work to programme with the Board included refreshing the organisational competencies to support workforce planning;
- vi. **AGREED** that a dedicated email be circulated to all staff advising of the processes for submitting new ideas; and
- vii. **AGREED** that a briefing be prepared on the outcome of the staff briefing that had been held in Lochaber on 30 October 2017.

7. Harbour Road Depot – Diriebught Depot Project

The Staff Side advised that at the Community Services meeting on 24 February 2017, it was minuted that works were to start on the last week of April 2017, lasting 10 weeks and for the move to be completed in July 2017. In the minutes of May 2017 there was an update informing the Trade Union's that a project manager was now in place but the Health & Safety minutes from the 26 May 2017 stated the move would not now be completed until September 2017. A further update was requested at the meeting on the 25 August 2017 but this was to be provided at the Trade Union Health & Safety meeting. It was minuted that the Phase 1 works at Diriebught would not be completed now until sometime in mid to late October 2017.

The Staff Side wished to know:

- what were the reasons for the delays and had Members been made fully aware of these?

- what have the costs been to date?
- what processes and checks had been put in place to further reduce the risks to the Council and the Budget?
- when was the move to Diriebught going to be completed?
- what was the final cost going to be?

In this respect, there had been circulated Report No. SPF/8/17 by the Director of Community Services which detailed responses to the questions from the Staff Side.

Responding to concerns raised regarding the overall project management and associated costs, it was explained that as the project progressed it had become apparent that the portakabins had to be replaced resulting in a significant change to the project. It was acknowledged that costs had escalated compared to those that had been discussed initially and the need to keep Trade Unions fully informed was recognised early. Therefore, this was a standard item on the Health and Safety meeting agendas but, in addition to this, separate joint partnership meetings were set-up with Trade Unions and meetings had also been held with staff. Some issues had been addressed but some remained outstanding. It was stressed that this was a tight site and it had been a remarkable partnership approach from staff and Trade Union officials to manage the project to date. Costs had been contained within the overall project costs and discussions would continue with partners.

Although this project generated revenue savings and a significant capital receipt, there was a need to ensure that the project continued to be managed properly. It was clarified that the project had raised critical health and safety issues and a commitment had been given that these would be addressed within the Service's annual Health & Safety budget.

The Director of Community Services agreed to forward to Trade Union colleagues a breakdown of the £90,000 revenue expenditure savings

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. AOCB

The following points were raised:-

Workforce Planning

It was felt that there was a need for a joined up approach to Workforce Planning and the Chairman advised that she had written to the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership to request that there be an agenda item on this at a future meeting. She explained all public sector organisations were experiencing difficulties in attracting professionals to the Highlands and a forum was needed on discuss key issues such as talent attraction and retention; apprenticeships; and upskilling. It was further requested that a report on Workforce Planning should be submitted to the next meeting.

Highland Council Programme 2017 - 2022: Local Voices Highland Choices

The Chairman tabled a copy of the Highland Council Programme 2017 – 2022 Local Voices Highland Choices and sought feedback on this. She explained that the Programme would be reviewed regularly and would be supported by the Corporate, Service and Local Plans which would be aligned with the key priorities as set out in the Programme.

Brexit

Responding to a question, it was explained that work had already commenced in respect of the impact Brexit would have on the workforce and further contact would be made with Services and Trade Unions to take this forward but the main difficulty was it was not yet known who would be affected. It was also reported that there would be a seminar for Members on Brexit and consideration would be given as to how best to involve staff with this process.

It was felt that a proactive approach was required in order to address a number of key issues such as what can we do to prepare for the future; what advantages/opportunities could be taken; Highland economy; and impact on workforce and the Council as a whole.

It was highlighted that in the past Trade Unions had been particularly helpful in regard to providing information to immigrants and a question was raised on what support might be available from them. It was reported that this issue had been raised with Unison but no response had been received to date.

Following discussion, the Staff Partnership Forum:-

- i. **AGREED** that a report on Workforce Planning be submitted to the next meeting;
- ii. **NOTED** the Highland Council Programme 2017 - 2022: Local Voices Highland Choices and **AGREED** to provide feedback;
- iii. **AGREED** that further consideration be given on how best to involve staff on preparing for Brexit.

9. Dates for Meetings in 2018

The Staff Partnership Forum **AGREED** the following dates of meetings in 2018:-

- Friday 2 February 2018
- Friday 4 May 2018
- Friday 3 August 2018
- Wednesday 31 October 2018

All the meetings to be held at Council Headquarters, Inverness commencing at 10.30 a.m.

The meeting was concluded at 11.20 am.