

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Committee Room 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday, 27 February 2018 at 11.30am.

Present:

Mr B Lobban (Chair)	Mr R Bremner (VC)
Mr L Fraser	Mr D Louden
Mr M Reiss	Mr A Jarvie
Ms M Smith	Mr A Sinclair
Dr I Cockburn	Mr P MacPherson

Also Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr J Gray
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Officials in attendance:

Mr S Barron, Chief Executive
 Mr D Yule, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
 Mrs C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform
 Mrs C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services
 Ms K Ralston, Area Care and Learning Manager (South)
 Mr G Morrison, Parliamentary Officer
 Mr K Masson, Climate Change Officer
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Davidson, Mr A MacKinnon, Mrs C Wilson, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A Christie, Mrs C Caddick, Mr D Smith and Mr J Gibson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

3. Provision of External Legal Services

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/1/18 dated 16 February 2018 by the Area Care & Learning Manager (South) which outlined the work carried out by the Peer Review Team in reviewing the provision of commissioned external legal services.

In this regard, detailed information had been provided on the legal services framework contract, comparison between other Local Authorities, the balance between internal and external legal advice, employment, procurement and litigation, alternative options, a shared employment post, combined employment/procurement post and conveyancing (specifically, options to strengthen capacity in this respect).

The Board – having thanked the Officers concerned for the work which had been undertaken - **AGREED TO RECOMMEND:-**

- to reduce dependency on and the cost of commissioned legal services by establishing a Solicitor post at a cost of £45,000 (either on a full time or part time basis) which would at a minimum be cost neutral, to focus on employment and some procurement and litigation activity; and
- to strengthen conveyancing capacity to deliver financial savings and additional income for the Council by establishing a Paralegal Apprenticeship post at a cost of £32,000 once qualified.

The Board also **AGREED** the following which would be taken forward at an operational level:-

- that funding for the Solicitor post would be achieved through top slicing service budgets on an agreed formula as approved by the Director of Corporate Resources;
- that, subject to a business case, a further Paralegal Apprenticeship post be considered should income levels exceed assumptions on a recurring basis;
- to improve the visibility of expenditure incurred in relation to commissioned external legal services through amending the subjective codes to provide greater clarity over this type of expenditure; and
- that exploratory work should be undertaken to identify the issues that would need to be considered should the Council wish to proactively market the Conveyancing Team to other public sector organisations as well as third sector organisations, such as Registered Social Landlords.

4. Review of Grey Fleet

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/2/18 dated 16 February 2018 by the Grey Fleet Team which outlined the key recommendations from a review of the Council's grey fleet, including preferred options in respect of grey fleet management going forward.

The review findings also addressed cost and risk implications for the Council and had been aligned to staff feedback on their dissatisfaction with current arrangements.

In this regard, detailed information had been provided on the current situation, current provision of vehicles, current policies and practices, travel hierarchy, climate change, analysis of data and findings, alternatives to grey fleet, IT as an enabler and a log of risks, issues and barriers to change.

The Board – having thanked the Officers concerned for the work which had been undertaken - **AGREED** the review recommendations detailed at Section 14 of the report as follows:-

- to reduce the need to travel;

- where travel was necessary, to reduce the associated spend and carbon emissions;
- to review the travel desk, including expanding its role to accommodate pool cars;
- to enable the use of car clubs where appropriate;
- to support active travel for short journeys;
- to review and implement new travel policies; and
- to adopt the implementation plan provided.

The Board also **NOTED** that the responsibility for reducing grey fleet travel costs following this review would sit with the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

Also, that all recommendations were operational matters which could be taken forward as delegated powers to Officers, apart from the recommendation to review and implement new travel policies which would need Committee consideration.

In this regard, it was **AGREED** that approval should be sought from the Council to undertake this work and that if subsequent Committee consideration was needed, that should be delegated to the Corporate Resources Committee.

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Thereafter, and during general discussion, it was **NOTED** that the first opportunity to refocus the car parking review would be at the next Board Workshop on 13 March. The refocus would be needed following the Council decision on car parking charges (which had been agreed by the full Council at the meeting on 15 February).

It was also **NOTED** that the savings arising from the Grey Fleet Review would form part of the savings target for the Redesign Board which had also been agreed at the Council meeting on 15 February.

The meeting ended at 11.50am.