

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

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 9 August 2019 at 10.30 a.m.

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mrs Margaret Davidson  
Mr A Henderson (by t/c)  
Mr Alister MacKinnon

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr John Gibson (UNISON)  
Mr Paul MacPherson (GMB)  
Mr Donald Morrison (substitute)  
(UNITE/UCATT)

**In attendance:**

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive  
Mr S Black, Director of Development & Infrastructure  
Mr S Walsh, Head of People and ICT, Corporate Resources Service  
Mrs C McDiarmid, Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services)  
Mr J Vance, Interim Head of Education, Care and Learning Service  
Mr M MacLeod, Council Redesign Lead, Chief Executive's Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

**Mrs M Davidson in the Chair**

**SUBJECT/DECISION**

**ACTION**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie, Mr J Finlayson and Ms M Smith from the Elected Members Side and Ms L MacKay, Mr R Selkirk, Ms M Macrae, Mr I Macleman and Mr A Bell from the Staff Side.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

The Forum **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Mrs M Davidson declared a non 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

Mr A MacKinnon declared a non-financial interest as his wife and daughter were employees 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 him 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 3 May, 2019, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

### 4. Matters Arising from Minutes

Arising from the Minutes the following matters were raised:-

- i. It was **AGREED** that a joint Minute/Action Sheet be submitted to future meetings;
- ii. It was **NOTED** that a meeting of the HR Sub Group would be scheduled for early September, 2019;
- iii. It was **NOTED** that the Standby Policy was to be reviewed to ensure that it clarified arrangements for rest time following call-outs for all officers. The revised Policy would be considered at the next meeting of the Community Services TU & H&S meeting on 23 August, 2019. Once approved the new Standby Policy would be communicated to staff.
- iv. It was **NOTED** that arrangements were being made for a meeting between the Trade Unions and HR to discuss Holiday Pay.

**Dem services**  
**Head of People & ICT**  
**ICO Resource (Comm Serv)**  
**Head of People/ ICT**

### 5. Service Trade Union Liaison Meetings

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

- (i) Corporate Resources Service – 4 June, 2019;
- (ii) Care and Learning Service – 3 May, 2019;
- (iii) Community Services – 28 June, 2019.

It was **NOTED** that the Development & Infrastructure trade union liaison meeting was postponed and would be rescheduled.

**Dir D&I**

Arising from the minutes, the following matters were raised:-

- i. Corporate Resources Service Minute – it was advised that the issues with Integra working slowly should be resolved when new

devices were rolled out to the Finance Service. In this respect, there was a commitment to try to speed up the rollout of ICT devices for all staff. A commercial in confidence update was given with respect to future plans for ICT. It was **NOTED** that the rollout of new devices to Integra users would be pursued.

**Head of  
People/  
ICT/ICT  
Operation  
Manager**

- ii. Care and Learning Service Minute – Early Learning Nurseries Staff – Members of staff were concerned that their contracts were changing at the start of the new school term. There had been no trade union consultation on this matter. It was **AGREED** that more information on this issue would be sought in order to respond to the concerns of staff.

**Interim  
Director  
Educ/  
Head of  
People  
ICT**

- iii. Community Services Minute – it was advised that there had been two staff briefings on the Trades review and feedback from staff had been positive. In particular one of the issues raised was that the rates of pay for in house trades staff were not competitive with private sector rates. This would be monitored in the Trades review and particular emphasis would be on promoting the package of benefits and career path that the Council could offer young apprentices in order to encourage them to stay within the Council's employment. There was also a request for the rollout of the pilot Trades project to Sutherland and Skye areas where there were significant problems in recruiting trades staff. Further, the Chief Executive and Interim Chief Officer Resources (Community Services) having visited various Council depots, commended the way staff worked with apprentices and this good working practice needed to be promoted more. Details of the Depot tour would be provided to the Staff Side.

There was a need to develop a communication plan on engagement with staff to capture staff ideas on the Council's change programme.

There was also a need to communicate with Elected Members and the Public to advise them what staff can and cannot do in terms of resources available to them and their capacity to undertake certain functions, particularly in relation to Community Services staff. In this respect, the Forum commended Community Services staff for the way they went to the aid of people during the recent flooding in Dingwall. These were exceptional and challenging circumstances and staff had acted in an exemplary manner.

Thereafter, it was **AGREED:-**

- i that the Leader of the Council would write to all staff commending staff for their efforts in dealing with the recent adverse weather conditions in Highland;

**Leader of  
the  
Council**

- ii the Council at its next meeting would be asked to formally acknowledge the contribution of staff on their exemplary efforts in dealing with flooding and keeping roads open during the recent adverse weather conditions in the holiday period; **CEX**
- iii a communication plan on engagement with staff would be submitted to a future meeting; and **CEX**
- iv. that details of the Depot tour would be submitted to the Staff Side and feedback on the outcome would be provided. **CEX/ICO  
Resource  
(Comm  
Serv)**

## 6. **Redesign of the Highland Council**

The Council Redesign Lead provided an update for the Forum on the Council's redesign since the last meeting of the Forum in May, 2019.

The Council's Change Programme had 15 key redesign projects including a review of Trades Services; Grey Fleet (staff travel); Asset Management and Energy. It was explained that there was now an additional change project as achieving procurement savings was seen as a high risk. An additional member of staff had been brought in to put together a plan to achieve procurement savings. Good progress was being made on the key redesign projects and examples of these were provided.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- a briefing on procurement for Members and staff would be beneficial, so as gain an understanding on the issues to be addressed. It was advised that the Members Cross Party Budget Working Group was to consider procurement at their meeting in September. There would also be a session on procurement with all Budget Holders as part of the budget process as there was a need for a fresh approach to procurement in order to achieve best value and potentially significant savings on contracts.
- the process of engagement with the Staff Side on the budget strategy and a new approach to procurement required to be considered. Preparations for the budget should commence as soon as possible prior to the budget being set by the Council in February, 2020.

Thereafter, the Forum **AGREED** that budget engagement meetings with the Staff Side would be arranged which would also include discussions on procurement.

**CEX/  
Head of  
People/  
ICT/  
Council  
Redesign  
Lead**

## **7. Staff Side Items**

### **i The Integration agreement between the HC and NHS Highland is to be reviewed. What will the Staff Side involvement in that review?**

It was noted that the HC and NHS Highland Integration agreement was to be reviewed by April, 2020. The Council had advertised a post to undertake this review and interviews were to take place on 22 August, 2019. It was intended that one of the first priorities for the postholder would be to draw up a staff engagement plan for the Integration agreement review. A self evaluation report would be available to the postholder on the outcomes of a recent consultation exercise carried out with staff in the HC/NHS partnership so that the postholder understood what the main issues around the Integration agreement were. In addition, a review would take place on the Legal Agreement and the financial element of the contract between the HC and NHS Highland.

It was confirmed that the new post would be a joint post between the HC and NHS Highland, but funded by HC and staff engagement would take place between September and November, 2019. It was generally felt that the current Lead Agency Model should not be changed, but it could be improved to make it work better. Key challenges to be addressed included housing for staff and supervision of staff moved over from the NHS to the HC.

### **ii In light of the current HC restructure, where will Area Managers and Ward Managers sit within the new structure?**

It was advised that there would be consultation on the new Care and Learning structure which would be implemented in early 2020. In terms of Ward Managers, the Executive Chief Officer, Policy and Governance interviews were to take place on Friday, 16 August, 2019 and one of the first priorities for the post holder would be to engage with Ward Managers on the structure.

Further, all the Executive Chief Officers posts should be recruited by October, 2019 and there would be a communication to all staff setting out the process of what happens next in terms of the organisational structure of the Council. A report would also be submitted to the Council meeting in September setting out the milestones for the transition of the organisation.

### **iii The HC Staff Partnership agreement is to go to the HR Sub Group for review, will this include consultation with the Elected Members?**

It was confirmed that the HC Staff Partnership agreement would be considered by the HR Sub Group for review and that Elected Members would be consulted during this process.

**Head of  
People  
/ICT**

**8. Any Other Competent Business**

There was no other business.

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

The Forum **AGREED** that the next meeting would be held on Friday, 1 November, 2019 at 10.30 a.m.

**Steve Walsh, Head of People/ICT**

The Forum congratulated Steve Walsh on his appointment as Chief Executive of High Life Highland and while he would be a great loss to the Council, they wished him well and every success in his new role and thanked him for all his hard work and professional advice during his time with the Council.

The meeting was concluded at 12 noon.