

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday, 17 December 2019 at 11.00am.

### **Present:**

Mr A Jarvie	Mr C Smith
Mr G Adam	Ms M Smith
Mr R Bremner	Mr A Sinclair
Mrs C Caddick (Chair)	Mr J Gibson, UNISON
Dr I Cockburn	Mr P MacPherson, GMB

### **Also Present:**

Mr R MacWilliam

### **Officials in attendance:**

Stewart Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance  
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment  
Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Sylvia Beswick, Corporate Improvement Project Manager  
Scott Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager  
Felix McGunnigle, Corporate Change Programme Manager  
Sue Nield, Catering Services Manager

## **Business**

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Lobban, Mrs M Davidson, Ms H Carmichael, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr Alasdair Christie, and Mr L Fraser.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Rapid Reviews – Update for the Board**

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/7/19 dated 9 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment.

A brief introduction was provided for the 4 rapid reviews completed and summarized in the report. It was highlighted that a Member was being sought for each rapid review to act as a champion to help drive each initiative forward.

## **Cashless Catering**

Following a summary of the rapid review, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- There was a query regarding the iPayimpact system only being active in a few schools. In response, it was advised that the network refresh provided the opportunities to ease implementation of the iPayimpact moving forward. Further it was queried as to whether the plan was to be in all schools by the end of the year. In response, it was answered that a full assessment was required to determine the need to have iPayimpact implemented in all schools;
- the iPayimpact system would require a PC in the kitchen which meant less strain on the school office. The change was welcomed by Members and Members were in support of the project moving forward expeditiously;
- Cashless catering had remained static and had not progressed in several years. It was queried whether the new system would address the concerns raised with the current system – In response, it was confirmed that the new system would address the concerns, however, the system would have to be utilized in order to be effective and would require an intense piece of work early on to get parents engaged.

## **Depots Rationalisation and Savings Opportunity**

Following a summary of the review, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the report did not provide a comprehensive list of issues with respect to depots, union and staff have been raising issues in depots for years due to health and safety concerns;
- it was essential to factor in the contamination of sites and that contaminated sites could not be built on;
- last year there was a report produced to Community Services Trade Union Liaison Meeting which identified sites for disposal and values on those sites and those values did not at all take into count the cost of decontaminating the sites in order to sell them;
- concerns were raised that most sites would cost more than they were valued, and this was an important fact to consider moving forward;
- decontamination of sites was not necessarily required if land was being taken over by a similar service and the land would be sold at a reduced cost;
- regarding timescale for this project it was estimated to take most of 2020;
- The board would be regularly involved as it was a cumbersome piece of work;
- there were queries made regarding naming the 13 depots that were referenced in the report, in response the officers commented that they would share the information outside of the meeting and it was clarified that the review would come back to the Board with specifics before any decisions made;
- centralizing depots was not always the most economical strategy and it was stressed that factors like winter maintenance should be reviewed to determine the most cost-effective way to move forward. It was argued that travelling back and forth from a centralized depot could be a costlier

measure. In response, the Executive Chief Officer of Infrastructure and Environment emphasized that the focus of the review would be about fit-for-purpose workplaces rather than centralization with the Board overseeing the work being carried out;

- Members' emphasized the importance of taking the views and voices of the workers and service users of those depots into consideration, how they would be impacted and how they believe the service could be better delivered.

## **Events & Festivals**

Following a summary of the review, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members' welcomed the review;
- both on ethical and economic grounds the Town Hall should be made more available to the public;
- the Town Hall would require an independent evaluation on fire safety and number of people allowed in;
- there must be a balance between generating income and expectations of the public and cost-free activities;
- additional comments were made about the underused northern meeting park;
- any discussions about the use of the Northern Meeting Park would have to be met with maintenance, investment, and development as fit for purpose modern cultural resource – and to work with community interest groups that have a historic association with the Northern Meeting Park;
- the Northern Meeting park is costing money for maintenance and not generating any income;
- it was queried as to whether the Council pays rates on the Northern Meeting Park. In response, it was determined it was not rateable;
- Gordon Adam and Callum Smith volunteered to be Member representatives for the Events and Festivals redesign.

## **Income from Camper Van & Motorhome Parking/Facilities**

Following a summary of the review, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was queried as to whether the focus would be the North Coast 500 and in response it was identified that the review would focus on a network of sites through the Highlands not limited to the North Coast 500;
- concerns were expressed about the focussing on Inverness for campervan sites when it was already quite developed in this area;
- the market would require more research to determine what the focus of the development would be, for instance, economic generation in the local town by encouraging campers to stay and contribute to local business and shopping. The Corporate Change Programme Manager confirmed that this review would look at what niche was required, and costs associated;
- there was a suggestion that on the NC500 route there was a need for waste facilities and it was suggested that these facilities and toilets could be offered alongside campervan sites;

- it was suggested that existing small businesses could be approached to determine if they could make small piece of land available to campervans and develop local economy;
- the North Kessock Feasibility Study had been done by Highland Campervans and provided cost-effective solutions and it is was suggested that this could be replicated in other areas as well;
- the Kessock site was a place that drew a lot of campervans and disposal of waste had become an issue so there was a suggestion that any plans should be made in conjunction with local partners to determine how to best to address these issues;
- there was a suggestion that the Highlife Highland Membership Card could be utilized in conjunction with the cost of the site to offer a temporary 24-hour membership to have access to shower and toilet facilities;
- Andrew Jarvie volunteered to be a Member representative for the Campervans redesign.

The Board **AGREED**:-

1. the Board oversees the implementation of the four reviews set out in this report, with active involvement from members and Trade Unions colleagues; and
2. that other Rapid Review outcomes are brought to future meetings of the Redesign Board

#### **4. Engineering Services Peer Review - Interim Report**

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/8/19 dated 17 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment.

Following a summary of the review, and during discussion, Members raised the following:-

- The expertise of the Project Design Unit (PDU) is not being utilized because of the costs involved from the cost multiplier. It was commented that there are staff who have knowledge and skills that are not being utilized as effectively as they could be;
- it was queried what the staff were being used for if not the PDU. In response, the Executive Chief Officer of Infrastructure and Environment outlined that these staff members undertake work to support the Capital Programme which included West Link, flood schemes, roads schemes, Stromeferry Bypass etc.;
- there was agreement that there was significant engineering expertise in the Council although it has not been used to its full potential consistently across the Council;
- It was emphasized that with the financial projection for the engineering department it was important to attract work and opportunities, so the staff can meet the resource requirements.

The Board NOTED :

1. The terms of the initial draft recommendations from the Review.

A further workshop with officers was to take place in January 2020 to inform the final report.

## **5. Catering Services – Peer Review**

There was a verbal update and slide presentation regarding school catering and staff catering during which time the following was reviewed;

- the review would focus principally on the staffing issues but looking at the other aspects as well such as reducing waste;
- staff absence would be a focus and there was a significant number of staff on long-term sickness and with occupational health issues;
- commercial opportunities such as mobile catering will be assessed;
- Talentlink was quite cumbersome and it was estimated that between three officers 1.5-2 days per week are spent on recruitment when that time that could be spent increasing uptake and working with schools;
- barriers to uptake include the 4.5 day week as this removes Friday lunchtime and therefore reduces the dining times for the other days by 25% to accommodate. Other barriers include competition (mobile catering vans in the area) and the dining environment (noise and ability to sit with friends);
- free school meals must be provided on the Friday – one option would be packed lunch for pupils to take home on Thursday or a financial reimbursement by BACS which would be the most cost-effective;
- with respect to Members' catering there was an entitlement for Members' lunch when they attend for committee and it was quite strict and there had been quite a reduction in the past years. They have looked at having a shared catering space and changing the current layout/size of the kitchen in hopes to make it an opportunity for income. In this regard, they were looking for Members' feedback.

Following a summary of the review, and during discussion, Members raised the following:-

- concerns for the children not receiving the Friday packed lunch – and the financial reimbursement not going towards the children;
- if there was a nice space and good menu for Members' catering this may be a cost-savings measure as Members may be inclined to use the catering services and it may cost less than the 12£ stipend. In this regard, a degree of capital work would have to be done to make it easy, accessible and spacious.

Following discussion, it was reviewed that a report would come back to the Board in the new year with recommendations for review.

## **6. Public Transport – Implications of the Transport Bill**

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/9/19 dated 17 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members commended the report as a timely review;
- It was important -despite its challenges- to look at access to transportation in rural areas including integrating transport, timetables and tickets to improve functionality for all service users;
- interconnectivity of services between trains and bus schedules generally should be a focus as this was a missing link in the Highlands;

- it was stressed that not everyone is looking to get to the centre and some are looking to get to the peripheries;
- if transport is a public service than the council has a public duty along with the community planning partners to lead the conversation and potentially look at having a public bus company or to improve and invest in the network already in place;
- there was a query regarding the scope of this review, whether it would be a complete replacement of what is already in place, looking at gaps, focus on rural areas or a hybrid model between private and public sector. In this regard, it was emphasized that the scale of the challenge ahead would be important to determine as it would make it easier to have the political conversation;
- connectivity to get to hubs and from hubs to other areas would encourage people to rely on the short-term frequent trips and this would help sustain smaller towns and villages – which would not only reduce carbon footprint but enhance the local economy;
- there may be an opportunity to address social isolation and mental health issues among older people through a more personalized transport service as there is public demand for this. In this regard, it was suggested a survey may be required with older people to determine what may help them get out of their isolation and this would be a wide scoped and interesting piece of work.

The Board **AGREED**:-

1. that the Board commences a review of the options for Highland public bus services; and
2. involvement from Board Members in such a review.

## **7. Trade Services Update**

The slides were circulated to members of the group along with an agreement to return to the Board with an update in April 2020. Additionally, there was a briefing circulated to Members regarding IT systems which had been requested by Members' previously.

## **8. Amenities Review (Workshop Session)**

Slides were circulated to members of the group and Cllr Bremner and Paul MacPherson volunteered to be representatives. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

The meeting ended 1:28pm.