

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board** held VIRTUALLY on Thursday, 8 October 2020 at 1.00pm.

Present:

Mr B Lobban	Mr R Bremner
Mrs M Davidson	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D Louden
Mr A MacKinnon	Mr A Jarvie
Mr D Macpherson	Mr J Bruce
Ms M Smith	Mr G Adam
Mr J Gibson, UNISON	Mrs C Caddick
Mr P MacPherson, GMB	

Also Present:

Mrs M Cockburn

Officials in attendance:

Mrs L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Transformation
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance
Ms M Zavarella, Administrative Assistant

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr I Cockburn and Mr P Siggers.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on Wednesday, 10 June 2020 were **AGREED**.

4. Workforce Planning & Development – Progress Update

There had been circulated Report No. RDB/1/20 dated 1 October 2020 from the Executive Chief Officer Resources & Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- it was important that the fast pace of this project continued as this had not gained the traction required in previous years;
- it was crucial for all managers to actively pursue the workforce planning strategy as this had not occurred in the past;

- the workforce planning sessions would be a review but also a refresher for many managers;
- rather than focusing on the end of a timeline, workforce planning should be a permanent function within an organisation;
- it was necessary that services did not function in silos whereby they were restricted to the skills audit within their service as this would be quite limiting;
- workforce aspirations must feed into the skills audit process as there may be a wealth of skills that employees have that were not being used in their current role;
- it was queried if the skills audit would form part of workforce planning to enable managers to determine if there were already employees in the organisation that had the skills required when a vacancy arose;
- there was a query regarding succession planning and how a vacancy would be swiftly filled in the event a manager had to socially distance or became unavailable for a managerial role;
- any successful organisation must have supportive workforce planning that was agile and made the best use of skill sets that employees had;
- a good manager would know their staff and what opportunities would fit well;
- the Council had done well with online learning, however, with respect to mandatory training, there was no way to monitor completion and this was a simple technical fix and should be easily available to managers;
- union colleagues had been part of many discussions around restructuring for services in the past which had been stalled and resulted in pressure on staff to fulfil posts and structures that should have been developed many years prior;
- reassurance was sought about the commitment to workforce planning given assurances made in past years had not materialised. In response, it was emphasised that it was important to look to the future of the organization and commit to workforce planning at pace as much as possible despite previous shortcomings;
- managers had not been supported as actively as they should have been in the past with respect to workforce planning and further, there was no mechanism to measure a manager's involvement;
- the Council had done well with managing long term strategic workforce planning issues, such as, the aging workforce and a successful apprenticeship program that was rolled out as a result;
- sharing skills of the current workforce across all functions of the Council was a challenge to aspire to; and
- it was important to recognise that in any workforce the strength of the organisation was in its staff.

Officers responded to the points/questions raised, during which it was confirmed that:-

- the pace of the project had to continue, and it was confirmed that there were challenging deadlines, however, resources would be built-in to ensure delivery;
- in relation to the skills audit, in addition to the workforce planning project there was the workforce data project which sought to determine the gap in the data that was currently available and would ensure that this data was captured centrally;

- the plan was for officers to have instant access to data and demographics around the skills audit and succession planning;
- this project would not outline how the information would be taken forward by managers but would allow for managers to have the information required for necessary planning;
- a flexible, agile workforce was required as priorities changed, and it was hoped that the lessons learned from Covid-19 would help inform this process; and
- the Council was committed to protecting jobs where at all possible and with this commitment it was crucial to be able to grow the organization, develop skillsets, have staff that were flexible within roles, and this would support any changing priorities if the workforce planning was being done successfully.

Thereafter, Members **NOTED** the progress of the Workforce Planning & Development Project.

It was commented that the date of the next Meeting of the Redesign Board was 27 November 2020 at 3:00pm.

The meeting ended at 1:40pm.