

**HIGHLAND COUNCIL
RECOVERY BOARD**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Highland Council Recovery Board held remotely on Monday 25 January 2021 at 10.30am.

PRESENT:-

Mr A Christie (Chair)	Mr J Gray
Mr B Boyd	Mr A Gunn (non-voting) (AG)
Ms C Caddick (late arrival, 11.14am)	Mr A Henderson (substitute)
Dr I Cockburn (Vice Chair)	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs M Davidson (Vice Chair)	Mr M MacLeod (non-voting) (MMcL)
Mr J Gibson (non-voting) (late arrival, 10.50am)	Mrs D Manson (non-voting)

Non-Members also present:-

Mr G Adam	Mr D Louden
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr I Ramon
Mr R Gale	Mrs T Robertson

Officers Present:-

Ms C McDiarmid, ECO Communities & Place
 Ms F Duncan, ECO Health & Social Care
 Mrs K Lackie, ECO Performance & Governance
 Mr M Rodgers, ECO Housing & Property
 Mrs L Denovan, ECO Resources & Finance
 Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation
 Mr P Whitham, Programme Manager (PW)
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator (LD)
 Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Mr A Christie in the Chair

Item	Subject/Decision	Action
1.	Apologies for Absence	No Action Necessary
	Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Jarvie, Mr Bill Lobban, Mr A Mackinnon and Mr P Saggars.	
2.	Declarations of Interest	No Action Necessary
	There were no declarations of interest.	
3.	Minutes of Previous Meeting	No Action Necessary
	There had been circulated and NOTED Minutes of Meeting of the previous meeting held on 23 November 2020 which were approved by the Council on 7 January 2021.	

4. **Recovery Action Plan: Update and Exceptions Report**
Plana Gnìomh Ath-shlànachaidh: Aithisg Ùrachaidh agus Eisgeachdan

AG

There had been circulated Report No RB/01/21 dated 15 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was reassuring that there was a three-month supply of the main Covid related Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) items. It was queried and explained that further guidance was awaited from Public Health regarding any revisions to PPE requirements. It was also confirmed that a service review of Covid secure measures was being undertaken and the outcome of this would be reported to the Recovery Board and the relevant strategic committees. It was further requested that a copy of the vaccine timetable be submitted to the Recovery Board for review;
- It was highlighted that nine out of the 13 slipped tasks directly related to the resilience response to the second wave of the pandemic. It was welcomed that a sponsor, the ECO Communities & Place, had been appointed and that progress of the Motion that had been agreed at Council on 7 January 2021 would be monitored through the Action Plan. The Chair proposed that the relevant strategic chairs be notified of the 13 slipped tasks and that these be referenced at the forthcoming strategic committee meetings;
- It was felt that the focus in terms of Supporting the Highland Economy priority was too narrow and it was suggested that there was a need to broaden this to include the response to Covid, Brexit and Climate Change. A request was made to bind these three aspects together when determining how to support the Highland economy, noting that this might raise positive opportunities to be grasped. The Chair indicated that he would discuss this with the Vice Chairs and the ECO Transformation to determine the best way in which to expand on these points in a holistic and efficient manner, i.e. avoiding duplication of reporting at committees. The ECO Infrastructure & Environment provided assurance that all these aspects were being addressed as part of a report being submitted to the next Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 February 2021; and
- There was a need to ensure that there were shovel ready projects to enable quick responses to new funding streams and it was also queried whether there was a co-ordinated approach with the requests for additional funding support and the budget.

Thereafter, the Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the latest summary of progress against the Council's Recovery Action Plan for Phase 3 to 31 December 2020;
- ii. **NOTED** the associated implications and pressures on resources in the delivery of increased response and resilience activity in light of the latest Covid-19 measures;

- iii. **AGREED** that the relevant strategic chairs be notified of the 13 slipped tasks and that these be referenced at forthcoming strategic committee meetings;
- iv. **NOTED** that the outcome of the service review of Covid-19 secure measures would be reported to the Recovery Board and the relevant strategic committees;
- v. **AGREED** that a copy of the vaccine timetable be submitted to the next meeting of the Recovery Board for review; and
- vi. **AGREED** that the Chair consult with the Vice Chairs and ECO Transformation to incorporate the response to Covid, Brexit and Climate Change within the Supporting the Highland Economy priority.

5. **Economic Recovery Strategy** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Thaic do Eaconamaidh na Gàidhealtachd**

MMcL

There was a verbal update by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment during which it was reported that a report on the Economic Recovery Strategy was being submitted to the next Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 February 2021. He emphasised the need for a comprehensive Economic Recovery Plan and, although the position was very fluid, much work was ongoing to ensure a strong foundation both strategically and in terms of the individual investment projects.

Continuing, he took the Board through the composition of the report and provided detailed information on the type of work being undertaken in respect of four key areas, namely development of partnership working, sectorial priorities, providing a focus place-based investment strategy to reflect local area priorities, and utilising the capital programme to maximise external funding opportunities. In conclusion, he advised that the preparation of the Economic Recovery Strategy, which would set out both key strategic and area priorities, would be used to influence future funding opportunities and deliver the best outcomes for the Highlands.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Appreciation was expressed for the exemplary work that had been undertaken on the green ports initiative, in particular the proactive approach that had been taken to address concerns regarding the environment and terms and conditions for employees had been most helpful;
- In terms of the green ports, the Scottish Government had advised of four key requirements, namely paying the real Living Wage, adopting the Scottish Business Pledge, commit to supporting sustainable and inclusive growth in local communities, and contribute to Scotland's just transition to net zero. These aspects were required in all aspects of industry and there was a need to be adaptable to suit changing needs;
- The high volume of workload on officers was acknowledged but there was a need for the Recovery Board to keep momentum and it was emphasised that support was available from Members in terms of providing information; and

- There was a need to progress priorities quickly with shovel ready projects to ensure that external funding opportunities were not missed. In particular, there was a need to progress digital connectivity as swiftly as possible and the ECO Infrastructure and Environment advised that a Briefing Note was being prepared for the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for their forthcoming meeting with the Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

6. Climate Change Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde

MMcL

There was a verbal update by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment during which it was reported that a meeting of the Climate Change Working Group was being held on Friday 29 January 2021. The Group would consider reports on emerging opportunities including landscapes as a carbon sink and also on the structure and vision of the newly merged Climate Change & Energy Team.

He advised that the Scottish Government had issued an update on Scotland's Climate Change Plan which set out the pathway to net zero and green recovery. A summary of this document was available for Members. In this regard, he provided a summary of the different strands of work that was ongoing (energy and heating efficiencies; transport funding opportunities; waste and the circular economy; and land use/change and forestry) to align the Council's Programme with Scotland's Climate Change Plan. Further details on this would be reported to future meetings of the Climate Change Working Group. He also made reference to specific projects such as the Loch Ness hydro scheme which demonstrated the benefits of utilising renewable energy by using a direct wire approach into Council buildings and installation of LED lighting which was being funded by the SALIX programme. Continuing, he stressed the importance of the Council working with partners to progress climate change in a variety of ways including electricity and renewable energy generation and the benefits of these supply chains.

During discussion it was noted that positive climate change improvements involved all services of the Council, and clarity was sought and provided on the Council's corporate approach across all services and whether plans were in place for decarbonising buildings. Assurance was provided that services were committed to achieving the net zero ambition and that the factors required to achieve this target would be considered as part of the decision-making process for Asset Rationalisation, Transformation and Capital Planning. However, it was acknowledged that further improvements were required to achieve the benefits of renewables.

Concerns were raised regarding the rollout of the LED streetlighting programme, and over delays in replacing individual faulty streetlights due to the impact of Covid-19. It was confirmed that the LED activity would be ramped up and rollout of the programme would continue in order to generate the planned energy efficiencies and budget savings.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the update.

7. BREXIT Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu BREXIT

LD

There was a verbal update by the Chair of the Brexit Working Group during which it was reported that the Trade and Co-operation Agreement (TCA) between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the European Union had been signed on the 31 December 2020. In this regard, it was highlighted that there were no tariffs or quotas, and no regression agreement on the environment or workers' rights. It was anticipated the TCA would act as a springboard for further negotiation.

As predicted, there had been delays in exports and on 19 January 2021, the UK Government agreed a compensation trade package for seafood exporters and Environmental Health continued to assist businesses with health certificates. He advised that a seminar was being held on the Shared Prosperity Fund on 1 February 2021 followed by a further seminar on the wider Brexit issues on 19 February 2021. He urged Members to attend and participate in these important seminars which would require ongoing lobbying on key Brexit issues.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that a reminder of the seminar dates be circulated to Members to encourage maximum attendance.

The meeting was closed at 11.22pm.