

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Committee Rooms 1 & 2 on 7 September 2022 at 10.30am.

Present:

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| Mr C Aitken (remote) | Mr R Jones |
| Mr B Boyd | Mr B Lobban |
| Mr R Bremner (remote) | Mr G MacKenzie |
| Mr A Christie | Mr P MacPherson, GMB |
| Ms Hendry | Mr C Munro |
| Ms Hutchison (remote) | Ms M Reid |
| Mr A Jarvie | Mrs T Robertson |
| Ms B Jarvie | Ms L Sagers |

Non-Members present:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mr M Baird | Mr D Louden (remote) |
| Mr C Balance (remote) | Mrs A MacLean |
| Mrs M Cockburn | Ms K MacLean |
| Ms T Collier (remote) | Mr D MacPherson (remote) |
| Ms S Fanet (remote) | Mr J McGillivray (remote) |
| Mr A Graham (remote) | Mr D Millar (remote) |
| Ms L Johnston (remote) | Mr P Oldham (remote) |

Officials in attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Transformation
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation
Ms C Townsley, Corporate Improvement Project Manager
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mr M Green.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Vice Chairs Cur an Dreuchd Iar-Chathraichean

The Board **AGREED** to appoint **Mr R Bremner** and **Mr A Jarvie** as Vice Chairs.

4. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2022, which had been approved by the Council on 10 March 2022.

5. Redesign Board Overview Foir-shealladh den Bhòrd Ath-dhealbaidh

There had been circulated Report No RDB/04/22 dated 23 August 2022 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

Issues raised during discussion included the following:

- it was important to remove barriers to commercial opportunities and to be realistic about what was possible;
- there were ongoing projects previously under the governance of the Redesign Board in respect of amenities, roads and asset management, and these would be considered for inclusion in the Redesign Board Programme at a proposed Redesign Board Workshop in October 2022;
- High Life Highland and other partners could be approached to take on certain projects to improve efficiency or value for money;
- information was sought and provided on plans for community engagement on current and potential projects. This would be further discussed at the workshop, along with how to focus resources on projects with the biggest financial and community benefits; and
- previously agreed projects should be reviewed to ensure they remained appropriate, and completed projects reviewed to ensure they had delivered positive outcomes.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

6. Redesign Board Programme Development Pròiseactan a' Bhùird Ath-dhealbaidh

There had been circulated Report No RDB/05/22 dated 23 August 2022 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

The Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance, referred to the intention to hold a workshop for Members in October 2022, and the need to prioritise redesign and lean projects, given limited resources, to those that would have greatest impact, and with a focus on financial savings as well as improvement. She sought feedback on the two projects mentioned in the report, Asset Management and Connected Customers.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the importance of asset rationalisation, given current budget pressures, was highlighted, as was the need to consider how best to connect with customers. Examples included the need to review the opening hours of service points and to tackle requests for overhanging trees more efficiently. Meetings to discuss such issues were costly and time-consuming and action rather than more discussion was sought;
- the benefits of the 'lean' business improvement methodology were summarised, and it was pointed out that some issues required more in-depth consideration, examples being fly-tipping and the use of agency staff;
- in relation to delays for customers at service points and when phoning the Council, this was not the fault of front line staff, but of the process, which it was confirmed was under review;
- it was possible that the loss of volunteers from Citizen Advice Bureaux and ongoing volunteer recruitment and retention challenges, was impacting on the number of customers trying to access Council call centres and service points, with the latter having restricted opening hours in some locations. In this respect, shared community hub solutions that could be used by various organisations would be helpful. The use of a semi-automated chat facility by the Council could filter out some easy to handle queries and free up time for call centre or service point staff to deal with more complex queries. It would also be helpful to ensure front line staff dealing with customers had up to date, accurate information;
- projects on fly-tipping and commercial waste were listed in the report and it was asked if increased recycling centre opening hours would help to address these issues;
- there could be scope to work on projects with public sector partners; and
- the impact of digital advancement could overlap with asset management, noting that improved digital services, for those able to use them, could increase the capacity of staff involved in face to face or telephone contact. It was clarified the customer engagement initiative was about facilitating the most efficient ways for people to contact the Council.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to the initial major strategic projects for the Redesign Board; and
- iii. **AGREED** to re-establish a programme of Lean/Rapid Reviews.

7. Asset Management

Pròiseact Cuibhreannachadh So-mhaoin

A presentation was provided by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing and the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Key projects summarised during the presentation were as follows:

- HQ modernisation
- Block B – modern flexible working space
- Rationalisation target list, with details on the initial batch approach
- Depot rationalisation in Inverness

- Portree public sector co-location projects.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- while the use of school buildings for other purposes could be useful, the safety and security of pupils and staff were the key priorities. It was hoped the use of isolated vestibules might be possible, and this was an issue to be taken into consideration when designing new schools;
- it was important to look at the longer term implications of proposed building rationalisations and full prior engagement with staff was essential. Attention was drawn to examples where it was considered this had not been properly undertaken;
- the Chief Executive emphasised the importance of taking a business case approach, and referred to the unaffordability of some buildings, which required to be mothballed or declared surplus to requirements as soon as possible. Not all staff requests were affordable but she would be engaging directly with staff on a weekly basis to discuss what was possible and to increase the speed of progress;
- it was pointed out that mothballing required a timescale as it was not beneficial to leave buildings to deteriorate beyond being useful;
- a business case was required for the proposed depot rationalisation in Inverness. Reference was made to some of the out-dated working conditions in the current depot set-up;
- it was clarified that the Board was not considering the relocation of Council Headquarters at this time;
- reference was made to potential uses for school janitor houses and for the Inverness Town House, although it was pointed out that the Town House belonged to the Inverness Common Good Fund;
- ward-level discussion between Members and officers in relation to the Portree public sector co-location projects would be welcomed;
- public sector hubs in various localities could be a useful future model, although there were administrative challenges with this; and
- the key message was to increase the pace of progress and all Members were urged to attend the planned workshop in October 2022.

The Board **NOTED** the presentation and the proposed approach to asset management.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm