

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 30 March 2023 at 2pm.

**Present:**

Mr C Aitken	Ms B Jarvie
Mr R Bremner	Mr R Jones
Mr A Christie	Mr B Lobban
Mr M Hayes, UNISON	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr M Green	Mr P MacPherson, GMB
Mrs J Hendry	Mr C Munro
Ms M Hutchison	Ms M Reid
Mr P Logue	Ms L Saggars

**Non-Members present:**

Mr M Baird	Mrs A MacLean
Mr C Ballance	Ms K MacLean
Dr C Birt	Mr T MacLennan
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr D Macpherson
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray
Mr J Finlayson	Mr D Millar
Mr K Gowans	Ms K Willis
Mr R MacKintosh	

**Officials in attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, Chief Executive  
Mr M MacLeod, Depute Chief Executive  
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place  
Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care  
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property  
Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance  
Ms A Clark, Head of Communities and Engagement, Communities and Place  
Mr B Porter, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Resources and Finance  
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation, Depute Chief Executive  
Mr M Bailey, Commercial and Efficiency Team Manager, Depute Chief Executive  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Depute Chief Executive  
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property & Facilities Management, Housing and Property  
Mr R Campbell, Property and Facilities Management, Housing and Property  
Ms L Burnside, Project Officer, Infrastructure and Environment  
Mr A MacDonald, Project Manager, Infrastructure and Environment  
Mr D Scott, Service Lead, Corporate Improvement and Redesign, Depute Chief Executive  
Ms C Townsley, Corporate Improvement Project Manager, Depute Chief Executive  
Ms J Ross, Customer Service Delivery Manager, Communities and Place  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance

## Mr B Lobban in the Chair

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs T Robertson and Ms M Smith.

### 2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Board **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2022, which had been approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

### 4. Redesign of Highland Council – Work Programme Update Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas às Ùr mun Phrògram Obrach

There had been circulated Report No RDB/01/23 by the Depute Chief Executive.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the Work Programme Update; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed series of Redesign Board Workshops to be scheduled during 2023.

### 5. Asset Management and Hybrid Working Project – Progress Update So-mhaoin agus Pròiseact Obair Ioma-dhòigheach – Cunntas às Ùr mu Adhartas

There had been circulated Report No RDB/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

During discussion, the following main points were raised-

- a workstream on the opportunities to work with Arm's Length External Organisation (ALEO) to source trades was being taken forward and the detail would be picked up further with Members at a Redesign Board Workshop going forward;
- the range of opportunities being explored, including in partnership with other public and third sector organisations, to use the space in buildings being vacated by the Council including commercial opportunities and income generation through the shared use of space;
- the importance of continuing to maintain the Council's depots pending the outcome and implementation of the findings of the asset management review. The Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property confirmed he would discuss any particular concerns with Mr P Macpherson outwith the meeting;

- preparatory work was underway in relation to potential costs associated with selling off depots, for example where there was contamination, and there would be consultation with key stakeholders going forward on this matter;
- further clarity was provided on the Property Service's process for clearing, isolating utilities and carrying out final checks on buildings being vacated by the Council on safety grounds and to ensure no additional costs were incurred. Members were advised to raise any specific issues directly with the Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for the savings target being revised to £1.3m, taking account of emerging information on the condition of buildings and the assets that could be rationalised;
- investment in vacant older buildings prior to letting would be considered in commercial lease negotiations for individual buildings, however this would be difficult to justify if it resulted in additional costs to the Council;
- in relation to revenue streams, it would be more evident in future reports on where savings were being achieved as buildings were being vacated; and
- the need to consider the dilapidations costs associated with the Council vacating the Town House, Inverness and being returned to the Common Good Fund, while noting this was not a matter for the Redesign Board.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the progress:

- i. to date on the project to relocate staff from Inverness Town House to Headquarters and on vacating the High Life Highland office building in Ardross Street, Inverness; and
- ii. on taking forward the other workstreams outlined in this report.

## **6. Roads Improvement Project – Update Pròiseact Leasachadh Rathaidean – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Economy, Infrastructure & Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised-

- this was one of the largest projects to be undertaken by the Redesign Board and was hugely important for Members and communities. The project was wide ranging and the staff involved be commended on their input;
- the investigations into the current roads budget distribution formula would be challenging given the size and varied geography of the Highlands. It was hoped that the proposed Redesign Board Workshop could be scheduled as soon as practicable, whilst recognising the level of work involved;
- in view of the significant additional investment in roads agreed by the Council, there was a need for a greater level of information to be reported to Area Committees so Members were better informed about capital investment in their areas;
- Members were strongly encouraged to attend the workshops in person if they wished to have an impact on this and the Board's other projects;
- further clarity was provided on the reference in the report to reducing staff and/or customer time dealing with applications or requests for information, the aim being to speed up the process so staff had more time to deal with other more productive tasks;

- reference in the report to a potential decrease in staff wellbeing and trade union relations was an item on the Board's risk register and that this was a key area of focus in terms of mitigation and management action;
- details were provided in relation to the risk relating to compliance with driving legislation and impact on resourcing levels and service. Further information would be provided to Mr M Hayes offline on this matter; and
- a main aim of the roads project was to redesign services to improve efficiency and ensure the roads budget for roads was spent over the financial year. This process would rely on the data information collection, workshop outcomes and engagement with Members.

The Board **NOTED** the progress of the Roads Improvement Project.

## **7. My Council Project Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phròiseact na Comhairle Agam**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/04/23 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following main points were raised-

- the importance of having the required data in this and other redesign projects to better understand customer needs as a starting point;
- there were current issues in customers being able to get through to customer services and it was recognised the staff in the call centre had a difficult task and did their level best for customers. The purpose of this project was to consider how customer contact methods could be integrated and improved to deliver positive benefits for the customer;
- confirmation that the potential for frequently asked questions to be posted on the Council's website to reduce the level of calls was currently being explored;
- the potential for a call back facility to customers to be provided. It was confirmed that this formed part of the work strand to upgrade the current telephony system;
- since the previous Lean review of customer services in relation to service points, technology and customer expectations regarding online services had changed significantly and this review focused on customer contacts across the entire organisation;
- a key feature of this project was making the Council more accessible to customers and communities in Highland and it was confirmed reference to accessibility would be woven into the Customer Contact Vision detailed at appendix 3 of the report;
- the potential to consider best practice from public service companies in relation to customer services;
- the potential for a web chat facility to be installed, highlighting this was the preferred method of contact for many young people and would deliver efficiencies in terms of call volumes and the customer journey. It was confirmed this was being actively explored;
- further clarity was provided on the proposals for engagement with community councils and other key groups to understand how best to use their experiences to inform processes going forward; and
- in terms of next steps, the importance of the end to end customer journey and ensuring the customer had sight of their requests throughout the contact process.

Thereafter, the Board:

- i. **NOTED** the update on the work completed during phase 1 (detailed in appendix 1 and 2) and the outcomes from the Board workshop on 7 March 2023;
- ii. **AGREED** the draft Customer Contact Vision detailed at Appendix 3 to the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed workstreams for phase 2 of the My Council Project as set out at section 8 of the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** that should the proposed Phase 2 workstreams be agreed, the detailed workplan, including resourcing requirements and baseline measurements, would be presented to the next Redesign Board for approval.

## **8. In-House Bus Operation Project – Update Pròiseact Bhusaichean na Comhairle – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/05/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Economy, Infrastructure & Environment.

A presentation was provided to update the Board on the Project.

During discussion, the following main points were raised-

- an explanation was provided on the proposal to purchase specific software for the project that could interface with existing Council systems to ensure the whole process was as efficient as possible;
- confirmation that an explanation would be provided to the relevant Health & Safety Group as to the reasons the in house team did not have the capacity to take on the maintenance of the vehicles. It was highlighted there had been discussions within the relevant Services prior to a decision being taken on this matter
- the potential to include information on the operation of the service, such as timetables, on the Council's twitter site for schools;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process for reimbursement by the Scottish Government for the use of under 22 and over 60 passengers concessionary cards;
- the opportunity to develop an app containing live data on bus running times for passengers. It was confirmed the vehicles had the capability to offer real time information and discussions would require to be held with other transport partners on this matter;
- Members were asked to bear in mind that the pilot project was at an early stage and there was a wish list of items of items to be progressed moving forward; and
- a query in terms of zero emissions and the timescale for replacing the existing fleet with fully electric buses and associated infrastructure. Members were advised that any funding received from ScotZEB would be available for use next year.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the progress of the Bus Company Projects and the next steps.

## **9. Corporate Employability Review Ath-sgrùdadh So-fhastachd Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/06/23 by the Depute Chief Executive.

In response to questions, it was explained that the review was focused on the Council's operation and making sure that its house was in order when it engaged with its wider partners. An internal short-life cross-service consultancy support team, including Service accountancy support, would work alongside the external adviser and oversee the consultancy work.

Key issues as part of the review would be to consider and identify whether there was duplication of services and correct alignment across Council services, and if unnecessary Council revenue funds were being utilised when external funding was available. The external adviser would identify any Council revenue funding efficiencies/savings that could be achieved through Service redesign and improved employment outcomes. The aim of the review was to achieve a better service and outcomes for clients.

The Board **NOTED** the draft specification and that the external adviser review when complete would be brought back to the Redesign Board for further consideration.

#### **10. Tree Management – Lean Review Stiùireadh Chraobh – Ath-sgrùdadh Claonaidh**

A presentation was provided updating the Board on the latest progress.

During discussion, the following main points were raised-

- it was hoped the review would deliver improved communication for the public and better management of expectations in respect of the Council's tree management given the frustrations around the current process and lack of consistency across areas and Services;
- the need to consider how the findings of the Lean review once completed impacted on the Council's updated Tree Management Strategy currently being considered by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee and which it was suggested did not meet the needs of residents;
- the need to be mindful that the Lean review dealt with the process and not the strategic policy;
- it could be helpful for responsibility for the day to day operations and the public to have the Council's tree management under one Service; and
- there was an opportunity for income generation in respect of the Council providing a tree management service to private residents and tenants.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the presentation.

The meeting ended at 4.07pm.