

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Committee Rooms 1 & 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 28 March 2024 at 2pm.

Members present:

Mr M Baird	Mr B Lobban
Mr B Boyd	Mr G MacKenzie (remote)
Mr R Bremner	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr C Munro
Mrs J Hendry	Mrs T Robertson
Mr R Jones (remote)	Mrs L Saggars (remote)

Non-Members present:

Mr C Ballance	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr R Gale	Mr P Oldham
Mr S Kennedy	

Officials in attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Interim Depute Chief Executive
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property
Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation
Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support & Engagement
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property & Facilities Management
Mr D Summer, Principal Transport Officer
Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr M Green, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, and Mrs B Jarvie.

2. Declarations of Interest

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were none.

3. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

The Board **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2023, which had been approved by the Council on 14 December 2023.

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/01/24 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion it was established that the additional coach for the in-house bus operation was not electric but diesel. In relation to the implementation of the TAS Recommendations, there had been no applications for the Project Officer post and this might be because there remained only three months on the contract. Work was being undertaken to have this extended, which would improve recruitment prospects.

The Board **NOTED** the report.

5. Asset Rationalisation Programme Update and Future Approach Cunntas às Ùr mun Phrògram Reusanachadh So-mhaoin agus Dòigh- obrach Teachdail

There had been circulated Report No RDB/02/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- confirmation was sought on the location of Block A of Council HQ, which was the block closest to Ardross Street;
- information was sought on the number of Council staff still located in the Inverness Town House, and how this compared to the numbers that had been projected. Some of the remaining staff at the Town House were working for the Common Good Fund or the Service Point. This information would be circulated to the Board and provided to the next meeting; and
- confirmation was provided that the issue of dilapidations was subject to ongoing discussions.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the progress on the workstreams outlined in this report;
- ii. **NOTED** the impact of several recent reports on the future delivery of the programme and the proposed approach to reconfiguring the Council's asset base; and
- iii. **AGREED** to provide information on Council staff still located in the Inverness Town House to the Board and to the next meeting of the Board.

6. Council Delivery Plan Overview Foir-shealladh mu Phlana Lìbhrigidh na Comhairle

A presentation was provided by the Depute Chief Executive on progress with the Redesign Portfolios in the Delivery Plan.

The timetable for the Delivery Plan was as follows:

- 14 March - delivery plan approved
- 16 March onwards – staff and partner engagement, and the development of milestones and PIs

- 22 April - all Member seminar
- 22 April onwards – further refinement of the plan
- 9 May – final plan to the Council for approval

A summary was provided of the three Redesign Portfolios in the Delivery Plan:

- Workforce for the Future
- Reconfiguring Our Asset Base
- My Council Project

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the final portfolio in the delivery plan was about delivery of the net zero strategy and renewables. This was most critical for the 'Reconfiguring our Asset Base' portfolio. This would be reported to the Housing and Property Committee as well as to the Climate Change Committee, to ensure strategic committee oversight;
- the need for milestones was emphasised, acknowledging that some would be relatively far in the future; and
- Mr Christie reported a recent issue with a lengthy wait for the Council's call centre, however it was explained that current average wait time was 2.5 minutes, with a 12% abandonment rate, which compared favourably with the local authority average. Specific calls could be investigated if the details were provided. Work was ongoing to improve online customer services, to free up call centres to focus on phone customers. Members enquired about a call-back system and while this was technically feasible, and was being investigated, other issues had to be taken into consideration. It was also suggested that a system which informed the caller of their position in the queue would be helpful.

The Board **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED**:

- i. the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure Environment & Economy, would provide further detail to the Board on how the employability review sits within the Workforce for the Future portfolio; and
- ii. the Head of Community Operations and Logistics, and the Head of Community Support & Engagement, would provide the Board with a summary of Service Centre telephony functionality, and recent call answering measures, to be included in a future My Council update.

7. Amenities Project Update **Cunntas às Úr mun Phròiseact Ghoireasan**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/03/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- assurance was sought and provided that battery charging equipment was properly risk assessed;
- consideration should be given to Members being species champions;
- information was sought and provided on weed control and pesticide use, with particular reference to glyphosate, for which alternatives were being considered, along with liaison with other local authorities. A summary was

provided of the decision matrix used to determine what action to take with regard to weeds, and it was hoped there would be a section on weed control on the public facing website and a weed control strategy later this year. Assurance was provided that the killing of weeds by the planting of trees and shrubs was an option taken into consideration. More information would be provided to Mrs T Robertson outwith the meeting;

- it was clarified there was a 5 year contract in place for ground maintenance machinery;
- it was confirmed that efforts were being made to make use of grass cuttings locally, including providing them to community food growing groups; and
- information was sought and provided on the policy for the replacement of bark at play parks, and on the use of Service Levels Agreements with Common Good Funds

The Board **NOTED** the ongoing progress.

The meeting ended at 2.50pm