

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 29 May 2024 at 2pm.

Members present:

Mr M Baird	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr B Boyd (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr R Bremner	Mr C Munro
Mr A Christie (remote)	Mrs M Reid (sub for D Fraser)
Mr M Green (remote)	(remote)
Ms B Jarvie (remote)	Mrs T Robertson
Mr R Jones (remote)	Ms L Sagers (remote)
Mr B Lobban	Ms M Smith
Mr G MacKenzie	Ms C A Stewart, GMB

Non-Members present:

Mr C Ballance (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr J Bruce (remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Ms S Fanet	Ms J McEwan (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr R Gale (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr D Loudon (remote)	Ms M Ross (remote)

Officials in attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive - 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 A Clark, Head of Community Support & Engagement
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead-Capital Planning & Estate Strategy
Mr A McCann, Service Lead – Economy and Regeneration
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr P Logue, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs J Hendry, Mr D Fraser, and Mr John Gibson (Unison).

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

There were none.

3. Minutes **Geàrr-chunntas**

The Board **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024, which had been approved by the Council on 9 May 2024.

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/04/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- in relation to the new website, meeting modern accessibility requirements was one of the key drivers for change. Information was provided on the processes being undertaken, including impact assessments;
- the advantages of customers using a verified account and secure portal for certain types of website transactions were summarised, although it would remain possible to use some web-based services without requiring an account. It was recognised that not all customers want to interact with the Council online so facilities would remain to support those who preferred telephone or in-person assistance;
- the new website should reflect the aims of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan, noting that 8% of the Highland population had Gaelic skills;
- with reference to the Project Officer post not being filled, as detailed in section 8.4 of the report, Mr C Ballance asked for information on measures being taken to reduce the risks to the delivery of the projects details; and
- it was hoped the new website would be more intuitive and have an improved search facility, with particular reference to the current lengthy process for paying for school meals.

The Board **NOTED** the Work Programme Update and **AGREED** the Assistant Chief Executive – Place would provide information on the Project Officer post, as detailed, to Mr Ballance.

5. Employability So-fhastachd

There had been circulated Report No RDB/05/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Board **NOTED** that the consideration and findings from the Employability Review would be incorporated into Council's Operational Delivery Plan 2024-27, Workforce for the Future Portfolio, and specifically actioned with the service re-design project.

6. Asset Rationalisation Programme Update and Future Approach Ùrachadh Prògram Cuibhreannachaidh So-mhaoin agus Dòigh-obrach san àm ri Teachd

There had been circulated Report No RDB/06/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought on milestones and timescales for the Portree Place Demonstrator Project, and a summary of the current situation was provided, with the Project Board due to start reporting to Ward Business Meetings and the Area Committee. Further information would be provided to Mr C Munro and local Members outwith the meeting as they became available;
- attention was drawn to the amount of time the Dingwall Office Rationalisation was taking, and the importance of working with the third sector and other partners. In response, reference was made to the challenges that had been faced, and to recent progress at the County Buildings with public sector partners. A key issue was the investment in buildings to facilitate the rationalisation of others, and attention was drawn to place-based planning approaches being used in Dingwall and Thurso. A key lesson that had been learnt was the importance of not making decisions in isolation, and reference was made to the strategic approach set out in the Highland Investment Plan;
- the Convener pointed out that if the Board had requested delivery of a project, then the Board should receive progress reports; and
- assurance was sought and provided that some temporary office changes at Charles Kennedy House, Fort William, were temporary operational issues as a result of flood damage in offices at Lochaber High School.

The Board **NOTED**:

- i. the progress on the workstreams outlined in this report; and
- ii. the impact of the approach set out in the report on the Highland Investment Plan.

The meeting ended at 2.30pm