

**Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Sandwick Road, Stornoway on Thursday, 20 June 2024 at 11.45am.

**Present:**

**Representing The Highland Council:**

Mr L Fraser  
Mr A Graham (remote)  
Ms J McEwan  
Ms K MacLean (substitute) (remote)  
Mrs M Paterson

**Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:**

Mr D Crichton  
Mr M K MacDonald (substitute)

**In attendance:**

Mr F Finlayson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer  
Mr R Christie, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer  
Ms D Sutherland, Strategic Lead Corporate, Audit & Performance, Highland Council  
Ms L Harrison, Accountant, Treasurer's Office  
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer, Highland Council

**Also in attendance:-**

Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland

**Mr L Fraser in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Mr M Cameron, Ms T Collier, Mr S Mackie.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement  
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

**3. Minutes of Meetings  
Geàrr-chunntas Coinneamh**

The had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of 9 February 2024, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

**4. Matters Arising from the Minutes  
Gnothaichean Ag Èirigh on Gheàrr-chunntas**

The following matters were raised on the Minutes:

- it was confirmed two quotes had been received for a logo for the Department and a further report on progress would be provided to the next meeting. An update would also be provided on the Department having an e-mail address that reflected its identity as a separate organisation;
- the action being taken to mitigate the risks of the Board being subject to a cyber attack. It was explained that meetings had been held with senior officers in the Highland Council's ICT Services who had provided an assurance the Board's IT systems were very secure. This was an ongoing process and further meetings were planned going forward;
- the importance of warning staff about the risks through blackmail or from using their laptop in a public place in relation to fraudsters gaining access to their log-on information to access systems. A common route used to induce individuals to reveal password and other secure information was through phishing emails. Staff were regularly reminded to be aware about this threat and would be tested throughout the year. It was important Members and staff continued to be vigilant;
- there had been a delay in the reporting of Board members' expenses due to the introduction of the new accounting system, however it was anticipated a monitoring report on this matter would be provided to the next meeting; and
- an update was provided on the lease on the Inverness office ending in May 2025 during which it was confirmed that initial discussions had been held with the landlord's agent who had indicated further talks would be welcome over the summer months. The intention was to bring forward a confidential paper on this matter to the Board in September/November 2024, depending on progress.

## **5. Departmental Report Aithisg Roinneil**

There was circulated Report No VAL/5/24 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which outlined the main business of the department since the last meeting.

Following a summary of the report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- the Board's thanks be conveyed to the staff for working exceptionally long hours in delivering the forthcoming General Election on 4 July 2024;
- clarification was sought and provided on the legacy 2017 running roll appeals which were making their way through the appeals system and the tribunal hearings that had been scheduled. There was confidence those appeals would be disposed of in accordance with the timetable;
- an explanation was sought and provided on where the boundaries lay in relation to electoral registration in terms of the Department's responsibilities and those of the Returning Officer for the forthcoming General Election;
- the nature of the complaints in relation to electoral registration as detailed in section 5 of the report. The Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer confirmed he would be content to provide more detail on this matter to future meetings;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the legal requirement for voters to show photographic ID at polling stations, including the acceptability of bus passes, and the application process for a Voter Authority Certificate;

- clarification was sought and provided on the resources available to the Department given the pressures associated with the timetable for the General Election and the impact of changes in constituency boundaries; and
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on shooting rights and ongoing disputes over these rights on sites on which there was nothing to shoot and confirmation provided that the position with RSPB sites would be checked.

The Board **NOTED** the recent activities of the department as set out in the report.

## **6. Code of Conduct for Employees Còd-giùlain airson Luchd-obrach**

There was circulated Report No. VAL/6/24 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which detailed a new Code of Conduct for Employees.

Thereafter, a point was raised on the potential for there to be a standard code of conduct for the whole public sector rather than individual public sector organisations having to reinvent their own version. It was explained that while it was accepted there were many areas where documents could be standardised, there were slight nuances between organisations. Key issues from an audit perspective was the inclusion of 'The Seven Principles of Public Life' and the fact the Code was reviewed in line with how the Board operated and adjusted accordingly.

The Board **APPROVED** the Code of Conduct for Employees.

## **7. Unaudited Accounts 2023/24 Cunntasan Neo-sgrùdaichte 2023/24**

Following an update, the Board **NOTED** that the Unaudited Statement of Accounts for the financial year 2023/24 are close to being finalised and would be e-mailed to Members' prior to them being submitted to the appointed auditor, Audit Scotland.

## **8. Internal Audit Reports Aithisgean In-sgrùdaidh**

### **8a Information Management Arrangements Ullachaidhean Stiùireadh Fiosrachaidh**

There was circulated Report No. VAL/8/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance), Highland Council, which provided details of the audit review of information management arrangements.

In discussion, an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the audit opinion of 'reasonable assurance' based on the issues identified in the six recommendations set out in the Internal Audit Final Report. In response to a query, an update was also provided on progress with the Action Plan and associated target dates.

The Board **NOTED** the Internal Audit report findings and audit opinion provided.

**8b Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24**  
**Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh In-sgrùdaidh 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. VAL/9/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance), Highland Council which included an assessment of the Board's framework of governance, risk management and control, and the associated opinion which provides information for the Board's Annual Governance Statement.

The Board **NOTED** the content of the report and audit opinion provided.

**8c Internal Audit Annual Plan 2024/25**  
**Plana In-sgrùdaidh 2024/25**

There was circulated Report No. VAL/10/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance), Highland Council which provided details of the planned work of audit reviews to be undertaken during 2024/25.

In response to a query, it was explained that a wide ranging review of the General Election 2024 would be undertaken afterwards by all Electoral Registration Officers in Scotland.

The Board **APPROVED** the 2024/25 Internal Audit Annual Plan.

Thereafter, reference was made to the importance of Members attending Board meetings, particularly given its relatively small membership, and the Chair advised he had raised the matter of attendance with the Convener. In discussion, it was suggested the potential for Member attendance to be recorded in tabular form and reported on an annual basis be considered and the Chair undertook to follow up on this issue.

The meeting concluded at 12.40pm.



**Highland**  
Community  
Planning  
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas  
Dealbhadh  
Coimhearsnachd  
**na Gàidhealtachd**

Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board held in #hellodigital, An Lòchran, Inverness Campus, Inverness, and via Microsoft Teams, on Wednesday 5 June 2024 at 10.00 am.

**Present:**

**The Highland Council:**

Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chair of the Communities and Place Committee  
Derek Brown, Chief Executive

**Highlands and Islands Enterprise:**

Stuart Black, Chief Executive  
Eann Sinclair, Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland (also representing Caithness Community Partnership)

**NHS Highland:**

Ann Clark, Vice Chair, NHS Highland Board (remote)  
Fiona Davies, Chief Executive  
Tim Allison, Director of Public Health

**Police Scotland:**

Chief Inspector Jamie Wilson (substitute) (remote)

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:**

Michael Humphreys, Area Commander

**Community Partnership representative:**

Eann Sinclair, Chair of Caithness Community Partnership (also representing HIE)

**High Life Highland:**

Douglas Wilby, Director of Corporate Performance (substitute)

**Highland Third Sector Interface:**

Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer

**NatureScot:**

Karen Mitchell, Operations Manager – Central Highland (substitute) (remote)

**Skills Development Scotland:**

Roddy Bailey, Area Manager – Highland (substitute) (remote)

**In attendance:**

Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council (remote)  
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Delivery Group  
Cathy Steer, Chair, Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group  
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group  
Carron McDiarmid, Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) (remote)

Gail Prince, Partnership Development Manager  
Melanie Murray, Principal Committee Officer, The Highland Council

**Also in attendance:**

Sarah Compton-Bishop, Chair, NHS Highland Board  
Colette Macklin, Head of Lifelong Learning and Gaelic, The Highland Council  
Eve MacLeod, HADP Coordinator  
Helena MacLeod, Community Learning and Development Support Officer

**Mr S Black in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Raymond Bremner, Chief Superintendent Rob Shepherd, Steve Walsh, Graham Neville, Stephen Sheridan and Chris O'Neil.

**2. Minutes of Meetings**

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Partnership Board – 1 March 2024;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 7 December 2023; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 20 February 2024.

The Board **AGREED** to consider item 16 at this stage.

**16. Confidential Item:  
Social Value Charter for Renewable Investment**

There had been circulated, to community planning partners only, Report No CPPB/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, The Highland Council.

The Board **AGREED** the recommendation in the report, subject to the points raised during discussion.

**3. Action Tracker**

The Board was asked to review progress of its agreed actions as set out in the Action Tracker which had been circulated.

The Board **NOTED** the Action Tracker.

**4. Resetting the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP)**

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/8/24 by CPP Senior Officers.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- thanks were expressed to all those involved for their efforts in resetting the HOIP;

- in relation to Appendix 2 of the report and the proposed action around partnership funding streams, it was suggested a piece of work was needed to identify which funds were in scope and how much room there was for local alignment, and it was queried whether this was something the Partnership Development Team could take forward. It was added that it was less about what the funds would be spent on through partnership alignment but how they were invested to maximise impact. There was also a potential issue in terms of timing, given the Board only met four times a year, depending on whether decisions on investment would be based on outcomes or if it was intended to look at individual projects. In response, reassurance was provided that it was not intended that the Board would make funding decisions on individual projects, and officers would look at amending the wording to make the position clear;
- with regard to the proposed action around data and intelligence, it was not just about improvement methodologies but about sharing intelligence and needs assessments to understand where partners needed to work together better and how that then led to jointly commissioning services;
- in response to a request for nature and biodiversity to be more prominent, it was explained that the HOIP had already been strengthened, based on discussions at the workshop with Board Members, through the addition of references to “natural capital”. However, it was confirmed it could be strengthened further by adding “biodiversity” after “natural capital”;
- it was welcomed that officers were responding to the feedback received in the engagement sessions that had taken place, and it would be good to highlight that to communities;
- information was sought, and provided, on the current thinking in terms of the implications for existing activity and how it was envisioned that the priorities for joint action around early intervention and preventative approaches would be agreed, recognising the capacity issues that existed in partner organisations and the Partnership Development Team. Attention was drawn to the next steps set out in the report which it was confirmed would come back to the Board for approval, and this reassurance was welcomed.

The Board:

- AGREED** the revised Highland Outcome Improvement Plan for 2024-2027, set out at Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the points raised during discussion;
- NOTED** the work undertaken since March to develop the HOIP Delivery Plan;
- NOTED** the feedback from the engagement undertaken since March to develop the HOIP Delivery Plan;
- AGREED** the proposed actions for the HOIP Delivery Plan, set out at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- NOTED** that work would be undertaken to develop milestones and measures of success to underpin the actions and this would be supported by a performance dashboard for the partnership that would aim to measure the long term impact of the HOIP. This would come to the Board for consideration in September.

## 5. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Strategic Service Review Programme (Your Say)**

The Local Senior Officer, SFRS, gave a presentation on the strategic service review being undertaken by the SFRS. Detailed information was provided on the current position in terms of resourcing and service delivery, the reasons change was needed and potential changes that could be made. It was explained that there were three stages to the review, the first being a pre-consultation online survey, “Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say”, which was currently underway with a closing date of 30 June 2024. Thereafter, an options appraisal would be carried out followed by a public consultation at the end of the year. Partners were

encouraged to complete the online survey, and encourage members of the community to do so, and feedback any Highland-specific comments to the Local Senior Officer.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- there was no clear demarcation between the SFRS and other services, and it was suggested there was a need for a person or place-based approach to consultations on public service delivery/change, rather than focussing on individual organisations. Discussion ensued in that regard, during which it was suggested that the Partnership Development Manager raise the matter at the forthcoming Community Planning Network meeting to see whether other CPPs were having similar conversations. In addition, it was suggested that the Board write to the Scottish Government Place Director to query how this matter was being taken forward at Scottish Government level;
- there were obvious opportunities for shared learning and joint working – for example, the SFRS watch system and the contamination risk to firefighters were of particular interest to NHS Highland and it was suggested further discussions take place in that regard;
- utilising different staffing models and co-location of services to create what communities needed made a lot of sense, particularly in sparsely populated areas;
- firefighters came into contact with people in distress and crisis, and it was necessary to explore the role the SFRS could have in some of the preventative work being undertaken; and
- it was confirmed that a link to the online survey would be circulated to partners.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;
- ii. **AGREED** that staff be encouraged to complete the national survey on the future of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and that any Highland-specific comments be fed back to the Local Senior Officer;
- iii. **AGREED** that the points raised regarding the need for a place and person-based approach to public service change rather than focussing on individual organisations be raised at the Community Planning Network; and
- iv. **AGREED**, further to iii. above, to write to the Scottish Government Place Director to query how this was being considered holistically at Scottish Government level.

## 6. Planet Youth Case Study

Eve MacLeod, former Planet Youth Lead, gave a presentation during which detailed information was provided on the Planet Youth prevention model, which had originated in Iceland, and the impact of the Planet Youth pilot in Highland in terms of reducing teenage smoking and alcohol and drug use.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- attention was drawn to the alignment between the Planet Youth approach and the Community Learning and Development paper at item 8 on the agenda. Staff involved in both programme areas were making good connections to build on the learning from the Icelandic model but also using evidence gathered in a different way, such as the consultation with children and young people in South Kessock and Merkinch in relation to the Whole Family Wellbeing Programme, as reported to the March Board;
- the Scottish Government was keen to see whether the Planet Youth approach was transferrable to Scotland. However, the context was different in Scotland in that health inequalities were greater and alcohol was more readily available;



- to have a “hero slide” for Highland as shown during the presentation would require the approach to be rolled out and partners to be fully engaged;
- the evidence-based nature of the model was commended; and
- in response to questions, it was confirmed that the five secondary schools participating in the pilot were Wick, Thurso, Golspie, Dornoch and Tain, and the figures in the presentation were from those schools. It was suggested that a control group was needed for comparison.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

## 7. **NHS Highland Director of Public Health Annual Report 2023: Medication and Public Health - Do the Right Thing**

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/9/24 by the Director of Public Health, NHS Highland, who gave a presentation in amplification of the report. It was highlighted that it was intended that the next Director of Public Health Annual Report would have a particular focus on inequalities.

The Board **NOTED** the 2023 Director of Public Health Annual Report and accompanying presentation.

## 8. **Community Learning and Development Year 2 Report – October 2022 to September 2023**

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/10/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council.

The cross-cutting nature of CLD and its importance to the work of the CPP having been recognised, the Board **NOTED**:

- i. the progress and achievements;
- ii. the priorities and focus for Year 3 of the CLD plan 2021/24; and
- iii. that the annual inspection visit from His Majesty Inspectors of Education for CLD would take place from 3 to 5 June.

## 9. **Active Highland Strategy and Action Plan**

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/11/24 by the Head of Health Improvement, NHS Highland.

During discussion, it was commented that, when refreshing outcomes, it was necessary to be clear about what the associated performance indicators were as, at present, there were many partnership outcomes that were potentially unanchored in terms of measuring success or otherwise.

In response, it was explained that part of the review of evidence that had been undertaken had been looking at what indicators should be used to monitor progress, and the proposed indicators would form part of the report when the final strategy and action plan were presented to the Board for sign off.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the progress to develop a refreshed Active Highland Strategy and action plan; and

- ii. **AGREED** to endorse the proposed outcomes for the refreshed Active Highland Strategy.

## 10. Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) Annual Reporting Template 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/12/24 by the HADP Coordinator.

In introducing the report, the Chair of the HADP drew attention to an error in the response to Question 19b of the Annual Reporting Survey, explaining that it should state that “the demand for options detailed above have *not* been formally quantified.”

In response to a request for specialist help in undertaking the HADP’s strategic risk assessment, the Chair confirmed that he would ask James Laraway, HIE, to contact the HADP Coordinator in that regard.

On the point being raised, it was explained that the People First – Language Matters – Partner Pledge was about the use of language and communicating in a way that did not stigmatise those affected by alcohol and drugs misuse. It was suggested that information on the Pledge be circulated to see if it was something other partners felt they could subscribe to.

The Board:

- i. scrutinised and **AGREED** the HADP Annual Reporting Survey submission for 2023/24; and
- ii. **AGREED** that information on the People First – Language Matters – Partner Pledge be circulated to see if other partners felt they could subscribe.

## 11. Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/13/24 by the Chief Officer, Highland Third Sector Interface.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that it was hoped to take the plan for the distribution of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Funding to the CPP Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group as, particularly for small grants, direction was needed in terms of what should be prioritised, and this should be agreed in partnership.

It having been queried whether it was also possible to align the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Fund with the priorities of the Children and Young People’s Mental Health Steering Group, which sat within the CPP structure, the Council’s Head of Lifelong Learning and Gaelic undertook to investigate, explaining that the funding sat with the Council’s Education and Learning Service.

During further discussion, the proposed approach set out in the report was welcomed, particularly the encouragement of grass roots investment and the capacity building theme which linked in with wider work taking place, which would be brought to the Board at a later date, on capacity building across communities and the third sector.

The Board **AGREED**:

- i. the approach in principle; and

- ii. that the possibility of aligning the Children and Young People's Mental Health Fund to the priorities of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Steering Group be investigated.

## 12. Communications Strategy

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/14/24 by the Partnership Development Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- it was suggested that a point be included regarding the legislative requirement for the CPP to produce an annual report. Similarly, there was a legislative requirement within the Community Justice (Scotland) Act that the CPP sign off the annual statement, including the public-facing version, to be submitted to Community Justice Scotland;
- the strategy might benefit from equalities screening in terms of using accessible formats for communication. In addition, following up the earlier discussion regarding the People First – Language Matters – Partner Pledge might help to build on the use of non-stigmatising and trauma-informed language going forward;
- in terms of means of communication, there was a lot of emphasis on the CPP website. However, fewer and fewer people were visiting websites, and it was suggested it was necessary to explore alternative channels such as YouTube and TikTok, the latter being highly used by young people in particular; and
- there was a lot of material already available but it was about promoting it more effectively.

The Board **NOTED** the draft Communications Strategy at Appendix 1 of the report and that a final version, taking into account the points raised during discussion, would come forward to the September Board meeting.

## 13. Partnership Development Team Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/15/24 by CPP Senior Officers and the Partnership Development Manager.

The Board **NOTED** the updated Milestones report to May 2024 included in Appendix 1 of the report.

## 14. Review of Strategic Risk Register

The Strategic Risk Register had been circulated for consideration and review.

The Board **NOTED** the Strategic Risk Register, and that it would be reviewed prior to the September Board to ensure alignment with the revised HOIP.

## 15. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 20 September 2024 at 11.00 am.

The meeting ended at 12.00 noon.

**The Highland Council  
Chief Officer Recruitment Panel**

Minutes of Meeting of the Chief  
Officer Recruitment Panel held  
Remotely on Monday 30 September  
2024 at 9.00 a.m.

**Present:**

Mr R Bremner	Mr J Finlayson
Mr A Christie	Mr B Lobban
Mr R Gale (substitute)	Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:-**

Mrs K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People  
Mrs L McGunnigle, HR Manager, Corporate  
Ms K MacDougall, Talent Manager, Corporate  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr K Gowans and Mrs T Robertson.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement**

There were none.

**3. Exclusion of the Public**

The Panel **Resolved** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**4. Shortlisting for Chief Officer Primary & Early Years**

There had been circulated a copy of:

- i. the Chief Officer Primary & Early Years Job Description and Person Specification;
- ii. a summary sheet of applications; and
- iii. copies of the applications received for the Chief Officer Primary & Early Years.

Members were provided with an assessment of the applications received. There were concerns about the applicants not meeting the criteria for the post and there were no applications recommended for interview. The Panel were in agreement with this assessment.

In terms of next steps, it was proposed to review the job description/person specification and marketing for the post and re-advertise as soon as possible. If it were the case that there were no suitable candidates following re-advert then a contingency plan be developed.

In the meantime, an interim acting up arrangement would be put in place from within the existing structure. While it would not be necessary for the Panel to be involved in the recruitment process for an interim candidate, the Panel should give their approval to the interim job description/person specification to ensure that the acting up position was time limited.

Following consideration, the Panel **Agreed**:-

- i. not to shortlist applicants for interview for Chief Officer Primary & Early Years;
- ii. that the post be re-advertised following a review of the job description/person specification and marketing of the post. A contingency plan would be developed should there be no suitable applicants following re-advert; and
- iii. an interim acting up arrangement within the existing structure be put in place, with the Panel to approve the length of time the post could be in place on an interim basis.

## **5. Dates of Meetings**

The Panel **Noted** that dates of meetings scheduled for the remainder of this Chief Officer recruitment process would be cancelled.

The meeting ended at 9.07a.m.

**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 2 October 2024 at 11am.

**Members present:**

Mr M Baird  
Mr B Boyd  
Mr R Bremner  
Mr A Christie  
Mr M Green  
Mrs J Hendry  
Ms B Jarvie  
Mr R Jones

Mr G MacKenzie  
Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr D Macpherson  
Mr C Munro  
Mrs T Robertson  
Ms L Saggars  
Ms C A Stewart, GMB

**Non-Members present:**

Ms A Atkin  
Mrs M Cockburn  
Ms T Collier  
Mr R Gale  
Mr J Grafton  
Ms M Hutchison  
Mr S Kennedy  
Ms E Knox  
Mr R MacKintosh

Ms K MacLean  
Ms J McEwan  
Mr J McGillivray  
Mr P Oldham  
Mrs M Paterson  
Mrs M Reid  
Ms M Ross  
Ms K Willis

**Participating Officials:**

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate  
Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive - Place  
Ms A Clark, Chief Officer, Housing and Communities  
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer, Business Solutions  
Ms H Airey, Project Manager (Strategic Improvement)  
Ms J Ross, Customer Service Delivery Manager  
Mr B Gray, Catering Operations Manager  
Ms S Nield, Catering Services Manager  
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**Mr R Bremner in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

**Leisgeulan**

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

**2. Declarations of Interest**

**Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were none.

### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Board **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2024, which had been approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

### 4. Customer Experience Strategy Ro-innleachd Eòlas Luchd-cleachdaidh

There had been circulated Report No RDB/07/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the strategy was welcomed, but it was suggested that more flexibility is needed in our approach to customer contact, with reference to periods of change, for example the introduction of a new service, when customer contact was likely to increase. There was a tendency for customers to contact local Members if they were unable to receive prompt attention from officers, and it was queried whether staff could be sourced from other departments during such times, as part of the One Council ideology;
- the need to implement the strategy as soon as possible was emphasised;
- it was suggested that Members should not be grouped with staff in the strategy, noting the role of a Member to scrutinise and hold officers to account. Other Members responded that they did not object to being included in the strategy in the manner detailed, given their role as part of an escalation process. The Chief Officer, Housing and Communities, explained the position of Members in the strategy was as internal customers of the Council and the importance of ensuring they received information in a timely manner. It was clarified that no criticism of staff was implied by the comment; and
- a summary was sought and provided of the monitoring and reporting process for the strategy.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the work undertaken to develop the Strategy; and
- \* ii. **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Council that the Strategy be adopted.

### 5. Food in Schools Biadh ann an Sgoiltean

There had been circulated Report No RDB/08/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed at the levels of nitrates in food, and the importance of sourcing suppliers that avoided nitrates and focused on high quality, organic or local food. Aside from the health implications, which were briefly summarised, high levels of nitrates in food could negatively impact the take-up rates of school meals. Reference was also made to the possible health concerns around microwaves;

- if children and young people were not offered food they wanted to eat, the take-up rates of school meals, including free school meals, would drop, and the budgetary implications of this were summarised;
- some Members felt the aims of the strategy were not sufficiently clear, and referred to the conflict between the various aims, such as to save money, to increase uptake, and to promote healthier eating habits. Other Members suggested the situation was more complex and nuanced, and it was hoped the Working Group would take this forward;
- engagement with children and young people on this was vital and school cooks were suggested as likely to know which meals were the popular with children;
- other issues raised included waste reduction, local procurement, and environmentally friendly processes, such as reducing the use of plastic wrapping;
- the value to children of the ‘farm to fork’ and similar approaches was emphasised, with some Members suggesting schools could do more in this area, including the involvement of children in meal preparation, while others felt that schools already operated on full timetables;
- attention was drawn to the fundamental aim of ensuring children were fed, and that some families relied on their children receiving a hot meal at school. It was suggested there was little point in providing more costly ‘healthy’ food if the children were unlikely to eat it;
- other issues raised included the need to provide sufficient time and space for children to eat and socialise at school, to ensure they had independence and choice, to re-consider the merits of the dinner trays used in schools, and to involve children in growing food and in masterchef-type competitions;
- once a policy had been agreed, the project should be piloted in a small number of schools prior to a full roll-out;
- the catering operations manager offer to look into an anecdote about a tray of food being wasted at a school;
- it was suggested that AI, for example ChatGPT, might be useful to help analyse data; and
- Mr Christie asked that the Board agree to invite senior secondary school pupils to join the Working Group, and Mr Bremner advised that this would be considered by the Working Group.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report including the outputs from the Redesign Board Workshop held on 4 September 24;
- ii. **AGREED** the next steps for “Food in Schools” as outlined at section 5.1; and
- iii. **AGREED** Members interested in appointment to the Working Group should email the Convenor in the first instance.

The meeting ended at 11.55am.