

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 20 August 2021 at 11.30pm.

**Present:**

|                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Mr B Lobban (Chair) | Mr A Jarvie                        |
| Mr B Boyd           | Mr D Mackay                        |
| Mr R Bremner        | Mr W MacKay (V/C Wick)             |
| Mr J Bruce          | Mr G MacKenzie                     |
| Mrs C Caddick       | Mr D Macpherson (V/C Fort William) |
| Mrs H Carmichael    | Mrs B MacAllister                  |
| Mrs M Davidson      | Mr M Reiss                         |
| Mr L Fraser         | Mr P Saggars                       |
| Mr A Graham         | Mr P MacPherson, GMB               |
| Mr J Gray           |                                    |

**Officials in attendance:**

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive  
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Transformation  
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing  
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation  
Mr J Scott  
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr G Adam, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr D Fraser, Mr J Gibson (UNISON), and Mr D Louden.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 23 March were **AGREED**

**4. Asset Rationalisation/New Ways of Working – Project**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/5/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members welcomed the report and the work of officers;

- With reference to the New Ways of Working regard would need to be had to the challenges likely to be faced by staff including having to adapt to returning, the continuing presence of Covid and need to ensure spaces were safe for staff and the public, identify the benefits of achieving a better work/life balance and keep the Council as efficient as possible including the processes that could be put in place to manage outputs;
- Clarification was sought on both the nature and duration of the proposed resources/posts noting 24 months had been suggested and given the quick response to Covid a shorter term might be sufficient;
- Managing the potential efficiencies will be a real challenge for the Board noting that there was an expectation of being able to identify and realise some quick wins;
- In asset rationalisation it is important that staff were briefed and fully on board with goals given the potential change for them and to achieve the right balance in managing potential efficiencies;
- The process was likely to take some time and there was a need to recognise the complexity and challenge of the project with different needs among the staff across the different areas and getting to a balance position would not be easy;
- Asset rationalisation was not necessarily a win/win and there was a need to achieve a viable outcome for staff, facilities and resources noting that there might not be a great market for a building and costs might be incurred. Rationalisation did not necessarily mean savings;
- The projected dates in the Brief were welcomed, though was acknowledged that dates were subject to change;
- Workforce planning, and the work on this through the Redesign Board, involved preparation for new roles in the new world, with a need to keep focus on that and tie this in with New Ways of Working;
- Data cleansing, in particular with reference to information held on buildings and people, is a vital part of the Project, noting that this was a significant piece of work which was needed to align the required information;
- With reference to the idea of Hub offices, hot desking proposals had the potential to cause concerns amongst staff and one size does not fit all, so would be managed with care;
- Need to ensure spending is prudent and adopt a radical approach to deciding what property might be an asset or liability;
- The approach to assets was logical and welcomed. With regard to new ways of working, the Council had changed, and both staff and officers were now using technology to better effect. Hot desking was a great way to work which was modern and the way forward;
- This was a great opportunity for the Council which had moved forward 10 years in 18 months and the Council should look at re-purposing buildings;
- Many of the quick wins lay in improving ways of working and processes rather than in asset rationalisation;
- Considering interdependencies IT would be a core element and reviewing the bring your own device to work would be welcome recognising the need to develop policies on issues such as data protection to support such flexibility;
- Succession planning for assets should form part of this project citing issues in the recent Wick High School development and the need to bring benefit to communities;
- What are the public's expectations in this project? Achieving a balance between service provision and buildings. The public need to be able to make contact with the appropriate officers; and
- Homeworking had been a very positive experience but need to be sensitive and avoid making assumptions about people's views noting that staff could be

working in inappropriate conditions at home. Staff could need keyboards, desks and chairs at home and need to be sure working in the right environment at home.

Thereafter Members **AGREED** the Asset Rationalisation /New Ways of Working - Project Brief and approved the Project Brief.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm.