

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held **remotely** on Monday, 8 November 2021 at 2pm.

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mrs M Davidson
Mr B Boyd	Mr J Gibson, UNISON
Mr J Bruce	Mr L Fraser
Mrs C Caddick	Mr B Lobban
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D Louden
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr D Macpherson

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Reiss	Mr A Graham
Mr A MacKinnon	Mr C Munro
Mr J Finlayson	Ms P Hadley
Mr A Henderson	Mr W Mackay
Mr J Gray	Mr J McGillivray
Ms J Tilt	

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Transformation
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation
Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Ms E Barrie, Head of Human Resources
Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager, South
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted for Mr A Jarvie, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr R Bremner.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

There had been circulated and were **APPROVED** minutes of the meeting held on Friday, 20 August 2021.

4. Property Asset Rationalisation

There had been circulated Report No RDB/6/21 dated 1 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the figures for the numbers of staff in each property were estimated, based on pre-covid occupancy;
- staff occupancy rates should not be considered in isolation but as part of a longer-term wider consideration of buildings, their capacity, and their locations;
- attention was drawn to the value of the Inverness Town House as an events venue, or similar attraction, and to its challenges as an office space. The Council paid rent for the use of the Town House, although it was pointed out that as the Town House was owned by the Inverness Common Good Fund, the rent payments were used for the benefit of the residents of Inverness;
- in relation to the Headquarters building, various opinions were voiced including moving from HQ to other office spaces in Inverness (such as the Town House), or to an out of town purpose built office, or rationalising as many Inverness staff as possible into HQ. Early plans for the future of the HQ building, including the Listed portion of it should be shared with the Board and the building included in any future strategy, which should include an action plan and timescales;
- with reference to any possible future closure of the County Buildings in Tain, it was important alternative accommodation was found for the Service Point in the town centre. Engagement with local Members on any such move was vital and assurance was provided that would be part of the process. Future accommodation for social services staff in Tain was highlighted as an important issue;
- the situation with regard to the hutted accommodation on Dochfour Drive would be clearer once the updated Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan had been considered by the City of Inverness and Area Committee. Development of that site for housing was problematic due its shape and proximity to Inverness High School but it could be used for other purposes;
- it was important to consider the numbers of staff likely to be required in the medium term and use that to work out demand for office accommodation;
- it was suggested that in 10-15 years there could be a separate Inverness City Council;
- the Nairn Finance office accommodated 12 members of staff and the building only required minor redecoration; and
- the report on new ways of working should be considered in tandem to the property rationalisation.

Members:

- i. **APPROVED** the list of offices in scope for review and potential rationalisation at Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the strategic approach to the review and rationalisation of the Councils Office Portfolio as set out in this report.

5. Amenities Project Update

There had been circulated Report No RDB/7/21 dated 22 October 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the Council Leader referred to communities wishing to fund public toilets. This was outwith the scope of the review and would be discussed outwith the meeting with the Head of Community Operations and Logistics;
- continued high standards of ground maintenance for cemeteries and burial grounds was vital;
- reference was made to issues at Kinmylies housing estate which would be further considered outwith the meeting by the Head of Community Operations and Logistics;
- the reduction in the use of weedkiller had impacted negatively on the ground maintenance of some housing estates;
- a Service Level Agreement with Housing was being developed and it was hoped that an appropriate level of landscaping would be achieved in future, through joint working between Housing and Amenities;
- a place-based service should be aimed for, with services working together in a coordinated manner;
- groups should be facilitated to support local growing initiatives, noting the environmental and community benefits. Pilot areas were sought for developing local food growing initiatives and the Head of Community Operations and Logistics would discuss with Mr B Boyd the scheme that had been ran at Dochfour Drive for food growing;
- it was important to encourage the use of allotments and the Amenity Services Manager would circulate information on allotment allocation to the Members present at the meeting;
- £234k had been received from the Scottish Government for the Highland-wide play park renewal programme and communities should be encouraged to seek external funding to supplement their allocation; and
- community initiatives and sponsorship of roundabouts were suggested, and the importance of community engagement and localism was emphasised.

Members:

- i. **NOTED** the 6 project objectives and the progress made to date across all workstreams;
- ii. **NOTED** the Scottish Government's allocation of funding for play park renewal for financial year 2021-22, options on the apportionment of the funding across Highland will be presented to Communities and Place Committee on the 10 November 2021 along with a proposed approach to developing a Highland play parks strategy, with updates to be provided to the Redesign Board;
- iii. **AGREED** the schedule and timeline set out in section 5.8.2 of the report, for place-based workshops/engagement sessions to support Objective 5.3 – (community involvement – place-based approach) with follow up actions facilitated through Ward Business Meetings;

- iv. **AGREED** the Amenity Services Manager would circulate information on allotment allocation to the Members present at the meeting; and
- v. **AGREED** the Head of Community Operations and Logistics would contact Mrs M Davidson in relation to community funding of public toilets, Mr B Boyd about community growing initiatives at Dochfour Drive, and Mr A Graham about the maintenance at Kinmylies.

6. HR System Replacement

Related to previous work managed through the Board on Workforce Planning, Members were advised that a report on the HR System Replacement would be put to the 24 November 2021 Corporate Resources Committee, and that Board Members not on the Corporate Resources Committee would be issued with the report as soon as this was made available. A Programme Manager had been recruited and was due to start in December 2021, and improvements to the current HR system were being pursued, pending the new system being implemented.

Members welcomed the planned upgrades to the existing system and suggested avoiding specific technical requirements for the new system where possible. Assurance was sought and provided that a data cleanse was planned alongside improvements to the current system.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

The meeting ended at 3.05pm.