

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in the **Council Chamber** on 18 February 2022 at 2pm.

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs C Caddick	Mr B Lobban (in the Chair)
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr P Saggars
Mr J Gibson, UNISON (VC)	

Officials in attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Transformation
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Ms C Townsley, Corporate Improvement Project Manager
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted for Mrs M Cockburn, Mr R Bremner, Mr G MacKenzie and Mrs M Davidson.

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

There were none.

3. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2021.

4. **Roads Project** **Pròiseact Rathaidean**

There had been circulated Report No RDB/01/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Following a summary of the report, the Chair referred to the opportunity for the Council to add up to £4million to the roads budget and he urged Members to support this at the Council's budget meeting on 3 March 2022.

The Chair read out the following statement from Mr R Bremner who was unable to attend the meeting:

'The Project Brief for the Roads' Improvement Project provides opportunity for all members, cross council, to make a considerable contribution to improving the Council's roads' infrastructure by ensuring that we have an effective, efficient, and sustainable service. By ensuring that we have an efficient service we know that we will be receiving best value for any future financial investment that we make. Amongst the objectives and outcomes we could include the fact that we will be able to better determine the programming of works, better targeting of problem areas across the Highland Council, an ability to better understand the financial investment required and the time period that we need to consider for a realistic recovery and improvement programme that we can have confidence in. This project will be one of the biggest projects that we will have tackled at Redesign and its outcomes will be hugely beneficial to Council. We need to be thorough with the data and information process that the Project Brief lays out but I can't emphasise enough how important it is for all members to ensure that they get involved and make their contribution count. I'm glad to be involved in this particular project, it has already been an education for me so far and I'm sure it will be for many other members as we take the project brief forward. I look forward to continuing the focus on this important project and trust that you can get behind and support the work of the team.'

Issues raised during discussion included the following:

- it was important reference was made in the Project Brief to key areas that would not form part of the project's scope;
- issues that could affect the road network should be included in planning permission conditions, for example an increase in large vehicles using minor roads. It was explained that location-based strategies were being developed to seek appropriate contributions for any damage to the road network;
- the emerging picture in relation to the staffing environment and sharing good working practices was welcomed; and
- information about equipment would be beneficial in the section on workforce planning and operations, and it was acknowledged that the issue of fleet and plant reliability was critical to the efficiency of roads projects, noting reference in the Roads Project Brief Interdependencies to the separate Fleet Project.

Members **APPROVED** the Roads Project Brief.

5. Asset Rationalisation Project Pròiseact Cuibhreannachadh So-mhaoin

There had been circulated Report No RDB/02/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- attention was drawn to the approach to area engagement that was trialled on Skye during December 2021, and Members were urged to engage with their ward profiles in due course;
- information was sought on the intended approach to public consultation, with particular reference to the use of school buildings and the possibility of

developing community hubs. All proposals would be considered in the first instance with local Members to identify particular local challenges and community groups. Capacity to use school buildings would be included in future reports;

- some Council-owned buildings were liabilities rather than assets and could be put to better use by other organisations;
- consideration should be given to sharing resources with other public agencies and third sector organisations to create multi-agency hubs;
- community groups interested in obtaining a Council asset could contact the Executive Chief Officer, Transformation, or the Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing, in the first instance;
- it was important that New Ways of Working continued to be integral to Asset Rationalisation activity, with reference to travel distances to work as an example. In this respect, the use of the school estate could be helpful to facilitating people working nearer to home, particularly in rural areas; and
- a key aim of the proposals was the reduction of external expenditure but cases would be looked at on an individual basis.

Members:

- i. **APPROVED** the updates to the strategic approach (section 4.7 and 4.7.1) to the review and rationalisation of the Council's Office Portfolio as set out in this report;
- ii. **AGREED** to permit strategic oversight of the Strategic Outline Business Cases (section 5.1) for each target property to be provided by the Redesign embedded Members (as a means of speeding up progress); and
- iii. **NOTED** the alternative approaches identified in section 6 for accelerating the pace of delivering the expected benefits and revenue savings. The Project recommended approach was to adopt the holistic approach outlined in section 6.3.

The meeting ended at 2.35pm, and the Chair referred to the successful and collaborative work of the Redesign Board over the years and hoped the next Council would continue its work.