

Agenda Item	4
Report No	CC/13/23

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Caithness Committee

Date: 29 May 2023

Report Title: Thurso High School Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report is to provide Members with an update on the current position at Thurso High School following the discovery of structural defects in Block A in October 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and **AGREE** Option 1 as the recommended and preferred option for Thurso High School.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource:** Capital funding for the recommended option will need to be considered as part of the review of the capital programme that is underway.
- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no implications to note.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** There are no implications to note.
- 3.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are no implications to note at this stage, but this will be kept under consideration as the proposals are developed.
- 3.5 **Risk:** All risk issues have been identified but will need to be kept under regular review.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** There are no implications to note.

4. Background

- 4.1 Following the discovery of significant structural defects to Block A at Thurso High School in October 2022, the block has been taken out of use and remains closed to all staff and pupils. Temporary modular accommodation was installed in December 2022.
- 4.2 The Housing & Property Committee approved a recommendation in January to install 8 modular classrooms to replace the accommodation that cannot be accessed. The units are being fabricated and are programmed to be ready for occupation in October. The tender for the overall project has been received and the contract is in the process of being awarded.
- 4.3 Fairhurst were instructed by The Highland Council to undertake a high level investigation of the options for the block and outline the work involved, the structural implications and the approximate cost of each option for appraisal and comparison purposes.

5. Thurso High School Options

5.1 Options Considered

Option 1 - Demolition of the block and make good the site and adjoining blocks.

Option 2 - Structural remedial works and refurbishment so the block can be brought back into use.

Option 3 - 'Mothballing' the block in its current state to allow demolition or remedial works to be undertaken at a later date.

Option 4 - Demolish and rebuild the block.

5.2 Summary of Options

Option 1 – Demolition: The modular classroom accommodation would have to be retained on site.

Option 2 – Structural Remedial Works and Refurbishment: This would be the riskiest option from a financial and Health & Safety perspective. There are many uncertainties associated with this option and firm costs would be difficult to establish before commencing work, with a high potential for additional works being added to the project once works are underway on site. This does have the advantage of reinstating the net educational area of Block A; however, the introduction of internal columns would reduce some of the useable internal areas.

Option 3 – Mothballing: The costs associated with this option are significantly less than any of the other options, but the block would continue to deteriorate in the meantime.

Option 4 – Demolish and Re-Build: This would be the highest cost option.

5.3 Indicative Costs of Options

The following are the indicative costs provided for each option.

- Option 1 – Demolition: £1.2M

- Option 2 – Structural Remedial Works and Refurbishment: £6.2M
- Option 3 – Mothballing: £50K of initial costs and then ongoing revenue costs of £1K to £2K per annum.
- Option 4 – Demolish and Re-Build: £7.5M

5.4 Summary

It is our view at this stage that the remedial works required to Block A to bring it back into use (Option 2) would not represent value for money, given the extent and cost of the work required and the limited remaining life of some of the other buildings on the campus.

Mothballing (Option 3) would be an interim measure, and the block would deteriorate further if left unoccupied for a significant period. There may also be an increased risk of sudden failure.

Option 4 – Given the relatively high cost of this option, and the condition and risk management challenges associated with the remaining buildings on the campus, this would not be the best value option if a completely new build to replace all the buildings was considered to be the preferred long-term solution. A masterplan to look at the longer term campus options will be developed.

As a result, Option 1 is recommended as the preferred option but further engagement with Members is proposed to discuss all the options identified.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property

Date: 26 May 2023

Author: Robert Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning and Estate Strategy

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the **Investment Sub Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 16 March, 2023 at 2.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr C Balance
Mr R Gale
Mr B Lobban
Mr D Louden

Mr A MacDonald (remote)
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Paterson
Ms E Johnston (representative from Trade Unions) (non voting) (remote)
Mr N MacDonald (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) (non voting) (remote)

Officials in attendance:-

Mr B Porter, Interim Head of Finance, Resources & Finance Service
Ms C Stachan, Principal Accountant, Resources & Finance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance :-

Mr K Ettles, AON, Investment Principal and Actuary
Mr R Barclay and Mr C Elson, Man Group (Item 6) (remote)
Mr M Ivory and Mr P Bottomley (Item 7)

1. Appointment of Chair

At the last meeting of the Sub Committee, Mr D Louden was nominated as Chair of the Sub Committee by Mr P Oldham and seconded by Ms E Johnston. As Ms Johnston was a non-voting member of the Sub-Committee, it was agreed that Mr Louden's appointment as Chair would be homologated at the next meeting of the Sub-Committee.

The Sub Committee **AGREED** to homologate the appointment of Mr D Louden as Chair of the Sub Committee.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, minutes of meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 21 October, 2022.

5. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during

discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of schedule 7A of the Act.

6. Presentation: Man Group

The Fund's Investment Advisor gave a short introduction about the Man Group and their investment strategy. Man Group's performance over the last couple of years had been extremely good and they held around 5% of the Pension Fund's assets.

In this connection there was circulated to Members only Report No. INV/1/23 which provided Members with possible questions for the Managers and further information regarding the performance of the Managers.

Mr Richard Barclay and Mr Charles Elson from Man Group were in attendance. Man Group are a global investment management firm focused on delivering performance for clients through a diverse spectrum of specialist active investment disciplines.

In a presentation to the Sub Committee, Man Group provided an overview of the Man Alternative Risk Premia product which aimed to offer access to a diversifying return stream in a highly transparent, liquid and cost-effective manner. They also outlined their investment strategy and performance.

During discussion clarification was sought and provided on several issues including that investment decision making was heavily dependent on technology; what was included in the portfolio; performance since inception and the Managers environmental, social and governance policy.

The Sub-Committee thanked the representatives from Man Group for their attendance and **NOTED** the presentation and discussion.

7. Presentation: Adam & Company

The Fund's Investment Advisor gave a short introduction about Adam & Company and their investment strategy and performance to date. In particular an undertaking was given to inform Members of any holdings that the Pension Fund had in Silicon Valley Bank which was shut down by the Federal Regulator on 10 March 2023.

Mr Mark Ivory and Mr Peter Bottomley were in attendance and gave an overview in relation to their portfolio, investment strategy and performance.

In this connection there was circulated to Members only Report No. INV/2/23 which provided Members with possible questions for the Managers and further information regarding the performance of the Managers.

During discussion questions were asked and responded to on the causes of weakness in markets in 2022 and the effect of this on investment performance; the contributors to performance in 2023; renewables as a long term investment; matters to consider on suitability of the investment portfolio. In this respect, an undertaking was given by the Manager to submit a proposal on the level of fixed income for the portfolios.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED**:-

i the presentation and discussion;

ii Adam & Co would confirm with Officers the current requirements for the portfolios that they held; and

iii Adam & Co would liaise with the Investment Fund Manager and submit a proposal on the level of Fixed income to be held in the portfolios.

8. Equity protection update

There were updates provided by the Fund's Investment Advisor on the equity implementation. In this respect:-

There was circulated to Members only Report No. INV/3/23 by the Fund's Investment Advisor with a recommendation to add equity protection and Report No. INV/4/23 by the Fund's Investment Advisor with a summary of the equity protection implemented in December 2022.

It was explained that the Sub-Committee previously approved protecting 30% of the Fund's equity portfolio. Global equity markets had fallen back this year, characterised by rising recession risk amid accelerating interest rate hikes by the central bank. The Investment Advisor's view was the odds of a global recession at some point over the next 18 months remain high. It recommended clients should consider managing equity risk exposure. One approach to do this was to add equity option protection to equity portfolios and further commentary on this was provided by the Investment Advisor.

Following discussion with Officers, it was recommended protecting around 30% of the strategic allocation to equities between 100% and 75% of current indexed value. This would retain any positive index gains on the protected equity portfolio up to an attractive cap of around 136% of its current indexed value over a recommended 3 year period, to cover a potential recessionary period, and access current attractive pricing for longer.

Questions were asked and responded to regarding the proposal and in particular it was noted that the current equity protection had been very positive for the Fund and protected the Fund in a fall in equity markets at the end of 2022. Also, there was the option to exit equity protection early if it was felt this would be beneficial to the Fund. The product had already given the Fund good protection, there was no cost with the product, it would offer protection if there was a fall in equities, but would still allow the Fund to gain if equities increased in value, albeit the gain would be capped at a high amount. The main risk was if there was a significant increase in equities then the fund would lose any gains above the cap.

The Sub Committee **AGREED** the recommendation as detailed in the report to protect around 30% of strategic allocation to equities.

9. Investment Activity Update and Performance Report

(a) There was circulated to Members only Report No INV/5/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

Members were asked to consider the report and note the costs of assets transition following the investment strategy review. Members were also asked to note that an updated Statement of Investment Principles would go to Pensions Committee, with the following change:-

i) The amendment to strategic asset allocation to increase the strategic asset allocation to passive equities by 8.4% and decrease the allocation to active equities by 8.4% until the active global equities manager is funded.

The reason for the change was that the investment in the global equities manager had been put on hold as they held Russian Investments and was in line with the Sub Committee's decision on 11 March 2022 that, "*the HCPF Investment Sub Committee call upon all Fund Managers holding segregated mandates with Russian Stock to divest in Russian investments as soon as feasibly possible*". This position would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Following a summary of the report by the Principal Accountant, the Sub Committee **NOTED:-**

i the report and costs of assets transition:

ii that an updated Statement of Investment Principles would go to Pensions Committee, with the following change:-

"The amendment to strategic asset allocation to increase the strategic asset allocation to passive equities by 8.4% and decrease the allocation to active equities by 8.4% until the global equities manager is funded."

(b) There was circulated to Members only Report No. INV/6/23 by the Fund's Investment Advisor setting out Pension Fund investment performance for the quarter ended 30 September, 2022 and 31 December, 2022.

Following commentary on the reports by the Investment Advisor, the following issues were considered:

- Quarter 3 had been a negative period for market returns and quarter 4 a positive period for returns. The Fund's performance for quarter 4 was slightly below benchmark due to the Fund being underweight in equities and equities had a strong performing asset class over the quarter.
- The Investment Advisor was content with the balance of the Fund's portfolio at present, but this could be looked at again when there was a more positive outlook for equities.
- Although values in property assets had fluctuated, the key factor was that rental income had remained stable;
- The Fund's portfolio was well diversified and had benefited from good Fund performance and adding equity protection had provided stability for the Fund.

The Sub Committee **NOTED** the report.

There was circulated to Members only Report No. INV/7/23 by the Investment Advisor, which set out Common Good and Associated Funds investment performance for the quarter ended 30 September, 2022 and 31 December, 2022.

Following commentary on the reports by the Investment Advisor, the following issues were considered:

- Each of the Funds delivered positive absolute performance over quarter 4; however, on a relative basis they all underperformed their respective benchmark;
- Longer term performance (3-year and 5-year periods to 31 December 2022) has been positive other than the Nairn Common Good Fund which produced a slightly negative performance over a 3-year period. On a relative basis, however, all Funds had underperformed against their benchmarks.
- An assessment of the Manager's performance in managing the Funds had been undertaken about a year ago and performance was broadly in line with other similar funds. The outcome of that review also referred to a further review being undertaken in two years time.
- In terms of Common Good Funds not invested through the Investment Sub Committee, Area Committees could approach the Sub Committee if they wished their Funds to be invested in this way rather than holding their funds in cash with the Council. The amount would have to be fairly significant to make it worthwhile to have an Investment Manager invest the money. There was some return to Common Good Funds by holding their cash with the Council.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

The meeting ended at 4.15pm

Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday, 21 March 2023 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Representing The Highland Council:

Mr M Cameron (remotely)
Ms T Collier (remotely)
Mr L Fraser
Mr A Graham
Mrs M Paterson
Mrs T Robertson (substitute)

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:

Mr D Crichton
Mr G Murray (remotely)

In attendance:

Mr F Finlayson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Ms M Thomson, Office and Support Manager, Assessor and Electoral Registration Service
Ms L Harrison, Accountant, Treasurer's Office
Miss J MacLennan, Clerk's Office

Also in attendance:-

Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland
Mr D Fraser, Audit Scotland

Mr L Fraser in the chair

Business

1. Apologies Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Ms J McEwan and Mr S Mackie.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntas Coinneamh

The had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of 25 November 2022, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

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

In relation to Item 10, Dates of Meetings 2023, the Clerk informed the Board that the arrangements for their visit to Stornoway had been put on hold given the decision by Loganair, the flight operator, to suspend flights to Stornoway. Also, there were no flights available for the Board meeting dates in June and September and it was suggested that the meeting be moved to Thursday 22 June 2023, when flights were available, once Loganair announced a resumption of service.

The Board **AGREED** the revised arrangements should they be required.

5. Revenue Monitoring Report Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-Steach

There was circulated Report No VAL/1/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

For the period to 28 February 2023 net expenditure to date was £2.724m, representing 75% of the annual budget of £3.646m. At this point in the year, the overall outturn was expected to be an underspend of £0.245m largely due to unfilled vacancies and an estimated reduction in both legal expenses and Valuation Appeal Committee costs for the year.

The Board **NOTED** the content of the report.

6. Proposed Revenue Budget 2023 Buidseat Teachd-a-Steach 2023 ga Mholadh

There was circulated Report No. VAL/2/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

In acknowledging the risk that the level of service might be compromised if staff recruitment issues were not addressed, the Assessor and ERO outlined the various vacant posts, including those that can deputise as Assessor or ERO. At present service delivery was manageable by moving the workforce around but a longer term approach was needed and discussions were to take place with the HR Team at Highland Council to look at innovation in filling posts. There were also difficulties in recruiting Electoral canvassers which had dropped from a peak of 70 to around 20. As a potential avenue of streamlining the process it was suggested that further approaches to telephone canvassing could be considered.

The Board:-

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed budget; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Assessor and ERO investigate the possibility of exploring further options for telephone canvassing.

7. Annual Audit Plan 2022/23 Plana Sgrùdaidh Bliadhna 2022/23

There was circulated Report No. VAL/3/23 by the External Auditor, Audit Scotland setting out the 2022/23 Annual Audit Plan for the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board. The report set out the planned work to be carried out in connection with the 2022/23 audit.

Audit Scotland had been appointed as the external auditor of the Joint Board for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27 inclusive and a brief biography of the team was provided. Members were taken through the responsibilities of the auditor and of the Board itself, the Financial Statements, wider scope and best value and the reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee.

In discussion the impact of Covid-19 was explored, as was the move to hybrid working and the need to achieve a balance between on-site presence and being remote. In response, assurance was given that Covid-19 was unlikely to be an issue for the 2022/23 accounts and two of the audit team were based in the north of Scotland. Whilst being mindful of the need to avoid unnecessary travel for reasons of efficiencies and climate change, the Senior Audit Manager did intend to be present when the final audited account were laid before the Board.

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the report.

8. Departmental Report Aithisg Roinneil

There was circulated Report No VAL/2/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which outlined the main business of the department since the last meeting.

The Board:-

- i. **NOTED** the recent activities of the department as set out in the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to grant 8 May 2023 as an additional Public Holiday to celebrate the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles.

9. Annual Complaints Report Aithisg Bhliadhnail Ghearanan

There was circulated Report No. VAL/5/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

In acknowledging that the low number was reassuring, the Board **NOTED** the Annual Complaints Report.

10. Records Management Policy Poileasaidh Rianachd Chlàran

There was circulated Report No. VAL/6/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

It was explained that the approach adopted by the service mirrored that of Highland Council and that the Assessor and ERO was confident that access to documents were restricted to only those required to see them. However, it was also pointed out that the service was continuing to move towards a more paperless approach.

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Records Management Policy.

11. Data Protection Policy Poileasaidh Dìon Dàta

There was circulated Report No. VAL/7/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Data Protection Policy.

12. Personal Data Breach Policy
Poileasaidh Briseadh Dàta Pearsanta

There was circulated Report No. VAL/8/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Personal Data Breach Policy.

13. Special Category Personal Data Policy
Poileasaidh Dàta Pearsanta Earrainn Shònraichte

There was circulated Report No. VAL/9/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer.

The Board **APPROVED** the updated Special Category Personal Data Policy.

14. Exclusion of the Public
Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Board **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 & 14 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

15. Business Continuity Plan in Event of Information Systems Failure
Plana Leantainneachd Gnothachais Ri Linn Fàilligeadh Shìostaman Fiosrachaidh

There was circulated to Members only, Report No. VAL/10/23 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer

Following discussion, the Board **APPROVED** the updated Business Continuity Plan.

The meeting concluded at 11.15 a.m.

The Highland Council
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive

Minutes of Meeting of the
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive
held in Council Headquarters,
Inverness on Thursday 20 April,
2023 at 11.00 a.m.

Present:

Mr A Christie
Mr J Finlayson
Mr K Gowans

Mr B Lobban (Chair)
Mrs T Robertson
Ms H Crawford

Officials in attendance:-

Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:-

Mr G Burns, Director, FWB Park Brown
Ms A MacLeod, Senior Consultant, Talent Acquisition & Research, FWB Park Brown

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest.

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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There were circulated to Members only, the Minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 16 February, 2023, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Executive Search and Recruitment Services for the post of Chief Executive

The Chair welcomed Mr G Burns and Ms A MacLeod from FWB Park Brown Ltd to the meeting. FWB Park Brown were the Executive Search company to support the recruitment to the permanent Chief Executive role. The Panel were given a background to the company and the representatives outlined their approach to the recruitment for the Chief Executive post. While marketing of the post had just commenced work had already been undertaken on the research element of the post and details of this work was provided. A combination of advertising and targeted approaches would be used to source and assess suitable candidates to the post for consideration. Typically a few hundred direct approaches to suitable candidates would be made. Also, it could reasonably be expected that between 8 and 12 candidates would be presented to the Panel, at the longlist stage, that fully met the criteria for the post. One also had to be mindful of the challenges that relocation may present for some candidates and it was a requirement that the postholder be based in Highland.

There had been a significant number of visits to the online job advert so far and the Panel were keen to be updated on interest in the post.

The Panel thanked the Mr Burns and Ms Macleod, FWB Park Brown for their attendance.

6. Timeline for Chief Executive/Executive Chief Officer Finance & Resources Recruitment

There was circulated to Members only a timeline for the Chief Executive/Executive Chief Officer Finance & Resources recruitment process.

Members were supportive of the recruitment timeline for the Chief Executive post. They were also supportive of including the following events as part of process:- psychometric testing; speed interviews (providing opportunity for non panel members to be part of the recruitment process; Stakeholders Group (providing key partner agencies the opportunity to interview shortlisted candidates). Feedback on these events would be provided to the Recruitment Panel.

In terms of the Executive Chief Officer Finance & Resources post, Members of the Panel were of a mind to delay the timeline so that the shortlisting and interview dates for the post were held after the Council's summer recess. This would allow the Council's new Chief Executive to be involved in that recruitment process. They also requested that candidates attend an Assessment Centre prior to formal interview. The Interim Head of People advised that the Head of Finance Service post was currently being filled on an interim basis and this would extend the time the Officer would require to be in the interim post. Also, the Head of Finance post would also require to be advertised once the ECO Finance & Resources post had been filled.

The Panel **APPROVED:-**

i the recruitment timeline for the Chief Executive post and the following events being included in the process:- psychometric testing; speed interviews; Stakeholders Group.

ii that the recruitment timeline for the ECO Finance & Resources post would be rescheduled and that the shortlisting and interviews would take place after the

Council's summer recess. An Assessment Centre also to be included in the process for this post.

The meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.

The Highland Council
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive

Minutes of Meeting of the
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive
held in Council Headquarters,
Inverness on Thursday 1 June, 2023
at 3.00 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Christie
Ms H Crawford
Mr J Finlayson

Mr K Gowans
Mr B Lobban
Mrs T Robertson

Officials in attendance:-

Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service
Ms K MacDougall, Talent Manager, Resources & Finance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:-

Mr G Burns, Director, FWB Park Brown
Ms A MacLeod, Senior Consultant, Talent Acquisition & Research, FWB Park Brown

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were none.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There were circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 20 April, 2023, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. 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.

5. Chief Executive Recruitment

The Panel considered applications for the post of Chief Executive. Members were provided with an assessment of the applications by the Director, FWB Park Brown (executive search company). Members were of the view that a further meeting next week which had been intended as a shortlisting meeting was no longer required given the number of applications received for the post. The Panel therefore proceeded to consider applications for shortlist to the post of Chief Executive.

Following consideration, the Panel **AGREED** a list of candidates for interview for the post.

There was discussion thereafter on events as part of the interview process and the interview format and timings. It was confirmed that psychometric testing would be undertaken as part of the recruitment process. An Assessment Centre would be arranged for the day prior to the interviews where there will be a meet and greet event for non panel members; a collaboration exercise with a Partner agency/agencies; and a media exercise. A presentation topic and themes to discuss at the interviews on Wednesday 21st June 2023 would be arranged. Also given the interviews would take a full day, it was decided that the Panel's deliberation on candidates would take place the following day i.e. Thursday, 22 June, 2023 at 2pm.

The meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.

The Highland Council
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive

Minutes of Meeting of the
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive
held virtually on Microsoft Teams on
Thursday 15 June, 2023 at 3.30 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Christie
Ms H Crawford
Mr J Finlayson

Mr K Gowans
Mr B Lobban
Mrs T Robertson

Officials in attendance:-

Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service
Ms K MacDougall, Talent Manager, Resources & Finance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:-

Ms R Little, Senior Consultant, Talent Attraction & Research, FWB Park Brown

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

There were none.

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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Minutes of Last Meeting

There were circulated to Members only the Minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 1 June, 2023, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

5. Psychometric Testing

Rebecca Little, Senior Consultant from FWB Park Brown was in attendance and provided Members with verbal feedback of the psychometric testing of shortlisted candidates for the post of Chief Executive. This would inform topics and themes Members may wish to discuss with the candidates at the main interview for the post of Chief Executive.

The Panel requested that the summary psychometric testing reports be sent to them and noted that candidates views on the outcomes of tests would be issued also. A proposed presentation topic for candidates at the interviews would be sent to Members for confirmation. Members were invited to submit areas they would wish candidates to be questioned on by 12 noon on Monday, 19 June, 2023.

The Panel **NOTED** the Psychometric testing feedback of candidates for the post of Chief Executive.

The meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.

The Highland Council
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive

Minutes of Meeting of the
Recruitment Panel: Chief Executive
held in the Interview Room,
Highlands and Islands Enterprise, An
Lòchran, Inverness, on Wednesday
21 June, 2023 at 8.05 a.m.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Christie
Ms H Crawford
Mr J Finlayson

Mr K Gowans
Mr B Lobban
Mrs T Robertson

Officials in attendance:-

Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of People, Resources & Finance Service

Also in Attendance:-

Mr G Burns, Director, FWB Park Brown

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were none.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

There were circulated the Minutes of the last meeting of the Panel held on 15 June, 2023, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

4. 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.

5. Appointment of Chief Executive

There had been circulated to Members only the undernoted documents.

- a) A copy of the Job Specification and Person Specification for the post of Chief Executive.
- b) Interview Scenario
- c) Copies of the applications submitted by the candidates.

d) Candidate Scoring Sheets.

Members were advised that one of the shortlisted candidates for the post of Chief Executive had withdrawn from the recruitment process. The panel considered proposed interview questions and then proceeded to interview the candidates.

Following consideration, it was **AGREED** that Derek Brown be appointed to the post of Chief Executive.

The meeting ended at 5.05 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 31 May 2023 at 2pm.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Mr R Jones
Mr B Boyd	Mr B Lobban
Mr R Bremner (remote)	Mr G MacKenzie (remote)
Mr A Christie	Mr P MacPherson, GMB
Mr M Green	Mr C Munro
Mrs J Hendry	Ms M Reid
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mrs T Robertson
Mr P Logue	Ms L Saggars (remote)
Ms B Jarvie (remote)	

Non-Members present:

Mr M Baird	Mr D Louden (remote)
Mr C Ballance (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Ms S Fanet	Ms K MacLean (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr A Graham (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms L Johnston (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)

Officials in attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Chief Executive
Mr M MacLeod, Depute Chief Executive
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property
Ms A Clark, Head of Communities and Engagement, Communities and Place
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation, Depute Chief Executive
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Depute Chief Executive
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property & Facilities Management, Housing and Property
Mr R Campbell, Property and Facilities Management, Housing and Property
Mr A MacDonald, Project Manager, Infrastructure and Environment
Mr D Scott, Service Lead, Corporate Improvement and Redesign, Depute Chief Executive
Ms E MacIver, Principal Engineer (Roads)
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, and Mr M Hayes (UNISON).

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were none.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2023, which had been approved by the Council on 11 May 2023.

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/07/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- clarification was sought and provided on the completeness of the relocation of staff from the Inverness Town House to Headquarters. Some Housing staff remained in offices elsewhere, and this had been discussed and agreed with team managers. Further information, including on any associated costs, could be provided outwith the meeting if required; and
- the Convenor clarified that all Members were invited to and welcome to attend Redesign Board workshops.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the Work Programme Update;
- ii. **NOTED** the proposed series of Redesign Board Workshops to be scheduled for 2023; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the review of the Community Support and Engagement structure is progressed through Redesign.

5. My Council Programme – Progress Update Prògram na Comhairle Agam – Cunntas às ùr mu Adhartas

There had been circulated Report No RDB/08/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the importance of improving the customer contact journey was emphasised;
- it was suggested that, given the specialist skills required to redevelop the Council's website and other projects being undertaken, it might be good value for money to outsource those resources. It was explained that external resources would be sought when appropriate but a significant proportion of the website work was to tackle the content, not the technical structure of the site, which remained up to date. It was also suggested that discussions take place with other Local Authorities and COSLA on their experiences in this regard. Members suggested that the search facility on the Council's website would benefit from improvement;
- several Members pointed out that some customers, particularly the elderly or those with poor internet connections, preferred telephone or face to face contact with the Council. It was clarified that streamlining the website / online service would allow people who preferred to deal with issues online to do this, and free

up resources for the service centre and service points to deal with people whose preference was not to use the internet, and avoid having to take phone calls from customers who had tried and failed to use the internet because, for example, they could not find the information they required. Equitable accessibility for all was key. Areas which attracted high volumes of calls and contact were being focused on;

- it was clarified that the £150k being sought was an initial request to get the project underway. Additional funds would be sought when required;
- the reasons for the recent alteration of hours of operation of the Inverness Service Centre were sought and provided. It was unfortunate that this had not been sufficiently publicised;
- the development of generic email addresses was important, for equity of access to services and to avoid reliance on individual members of staff; and
- further information on timescales, and visualisations of the projects would be useful in future reports.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the update against the work of the My Council Programme;
- ii. **NOTED** that a Programme approach will be taken to managing the projects contained within My Council; and
- iii. **AGREED** the proposal to draw down £0.150m from the £0.500m agreed at the Budget Council to support web development work on the My Council project as outlined at section 6 of the report.

6. Renewable Investment in Solar and Battery Storage Tasgadh So-ùrachaidh ann an Stòradh Grèine is Bataraidh

There had been circulated Report No RDB/09/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the proposals in the report were welcomed and should be taken forward as early as possible;
- the cheapest source of energy was energy not used though efficiency and reduction;
- the creation of an energy company was being considered but was not likely to be standard in nature;
- energy produced from landfill gases was not considered renewable and this was not being undertaken at the present time;
- noting that Salix was a main source of funding, information was sought on the ability of individuals to invest in renewable resources. It was clarified that Salix would be the main fund for smaller installations on the estate, but larger solar farms and battery storage would require an investment decision by the Council. It was hoped that Salix funded projects would become self-funding in due course;
- in relation to use of the school estate for solar panels, the existing estate was being brought up to full efficiency and expansion plans would be considered thereafter;
- solar panels in car parks were being considered but to date no site had been found that offered greater potential than putting the panels on the building;
- appropriate training programmes with Skills Development Scotland or UHI should be developed;

- an outline was provided of intended action following consideration of the projects by the Council on 29 June 2023, with the aim of coming to the Board with an investment decision by March 2024;
- the importance of generating energy, rather than just supplying it, was emphasised;
- information was sought and provided on discussions underway with insurers in response to fire safety concerns around the installation of solar panels on schools. Some mitigation in the form of changes to maintenance regimes to tackle this was likely but progress was encouraging;
- information was sought and provided on possible returns on investment and the likely timescales for connection to the grid, and with this being between 2 to 15 years, depending on site issues; and
- the North of Scotland was the biggest producer of renewable energy and it was important to continue to work to ensure the Highlands received appropriate benefits in return.

The Board:

- NOTED** progress to date in evaluating and identifying a plan of action to ensure all energy assets across the Council estate provides optimum cost-saving benefits to the Council;
- AGREED** the proposed changes for the operation of self-generating assets to ensure future management and reporting reflect the importance of energy assets within the Council;
- NOTED** the potential for developing a commercial onsite Power purchase agreement (PPA) model across tenanted properties within the Council's commercial estate;
- AGREED** the development of a pilot business case for the development of solar PPA self-generation model;
- NOTED** progress to date in identifying and assessing the potential for the development of utility-level solar generation and storage on Council owned land;
- AGREED** the engagement of an independent Grid consultant to establish grid constraint and connection viability across all sites;
- AGREED** the development of sites identified as viable to a full business plan for development potential; and
- AGREED** that a separate report is brought to Highland Council to seek investment funds to proceed to investment decision stage on the projects set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 3pm.