

**The Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum –  
Elected Members/Staff Side Group**

Minutes of Meeting of The Highland Council **Staff Partnership Forum** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Wednesday 7 May 2025 at 10.30 a.m.**

**Present:**

**Employer's Representatives:**

Mr R Bremner (remote)	Mr B Lobban
Mr A Christie (remote)	Mr D Louden (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr G Mackenzie(remote)
Mr D Fraser	

**Staff Side Representatives:**

Mr J Gibson, UNISON	Mr R Boyle (UNITE)
Mrs C A Stewart (GMB)	

**In attendance:**

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive  
Mr A Gunn (**AG**), Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate  
Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive – Place  
Ms A Jansson, Chief Officer – Education (Primary) (remote)  
Ms E Barrie (**EB**), Head of People, Corporate  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager (remote)

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

**SUBJECT/DECISION**

**ACTION**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr K Gowans, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Mrs K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive (People) from the Employer's Side and Ms L MacKay (UNISON), Ms L MacAskill (GMB), Mr M Smith (UNITE/UCATT) and Ms S Purdie (RCN) from the Staff Side. Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, also submitted an apology.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

**3. Staff Side items**

HQ carpark – issues around capacity and staff (both based there and visiting) unable to get parking spaces

The Assistant Chief Executive - Place acknowledged the frustrations of staff unable to secure a car parking space at Council Headquarters. Lack of car parking spaces had always been an issue and he referred to the situation pre-Covid when 700 staff were in the building daily. This had necessitated nearby residents to seek parking permit

arrangements because of the over-spill from Headquarters. It was hoped that by the end of May 17 bays would become available when the Northern Meeting Park works were completed. 27 bays had been reserved for Members to ensure they could park, especially on Committee days. In total 250 general bays were available but it was hoped this could be enhanced by relocating fleet vehicles to Dochfour Drive and banning Motor Homes from using the car park, although the latter would require a change to the Order. As all were aware, the Corporate Asset Plan was ongoing and this too might help in the medium term. Meantime, over the Summer Recess, the Members' parking area would be freed up for general staff use. Parking bays would also be reserved for loading/unloading – especially useful for Health Visitors and ICT staff.

The staff side pointed out the frustrations of staff trying to park and yet having to pass an area which was underutilised on a day-to-day basis by Members. The situation was exacerbated by its status as a public car park. The banning of Motor Homes would help given the space that they took up. It was suggested that consideration could be given to grass areas around Headquarters which could be turned into additional spaces and that staff parking permits could be used on Ardross Street. Those coming to Headquarters to attend meetings could claim parking charges back as expenses but staff at HQ were unable to do likewise.

In response, it was pointed out there was no contractual obligation for the Council to provide car parking. Turning the grass area on the Ardross Street side of the building had been considered before but, until it was decided what the older part of Headquarters was to be used for, it would be premature to make any changes. Allowing staff to park on Ardross Street would have knock-on impact on businesses located there and would also use spaces that the tour buses from the cruise ships occupied, the latter generating income for the Council. Parking permits for council car parks (with the exception of Rose Street) could be purchased and perhaps this could be promoted more.

The Forum **Noted** the briefing.

#### **4. Investors in People update**

The Forum were updated on progress relating to Investors in People (IIP). Investors in People was a recognition that an organisation looks to improve performance and realise objectives through the management and development of its people.

The pilot project in the Corporate Cluster would start under the Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance. An IIP survey was underway to ascertain how the organisation compared to the various elements of IIP. The survey would be independently assessed and interviews held with selected staff. This would then lead to an Action Plan being developed. Assurances were provided that no individual would be able to be identified. Following completion of this exercise, the IIP would then be rolled out to the rest of the Corporate Cluster.

Discussions would take place at monthly meetings with the Unions, **AG/EB** but a more general progress report would be considered at quarterly Forum meetings.

The Forum **Noted** the update on Investors in People.

## **5. Minutes of Last Meeting**

There had been circulated the minutes of the last meeting of the Forum held on 20 February 2025, the terms of which were **Approved**.

## **6. Matters Arising from Minutes**

The following updates on actions from the last meeting were provided:-

i Action - Officers to meet with trade unions to discuss issues relating to the disciplinary/grievance process. *Action completed*.

ii Action - high level statistics on grievances/disciplinary cases, including presented in tabular format, would continue to be submitted to future meetings of the Forum.

There was a verbal presentation on statistics relating to disciplinary and grievances. It was commented that, given the number of employees in the Council, the number of grievances/disciplinary cases were low.

## **7. Service Trade Union Liaison Meetings**

There were circulated the following Service Trade Union Liaison Minutes of Meetings, the terms of which were **Noted**:-

- i. Corporate – 2 April 2025;
- ii. Education – 5 March 2025; and
- iii. Health & Social Care – 16 April 2025

## **8. Date of Next Meeting**

The Forum **Agreed** the following change in date of the next meeting – from Tuesday, 12 August to Thursday, 21 August at 2.30 p.m.

The meeting concluded at 11 a.m.