

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, 18 February, 2025 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Representing The Highland Council:

Mr B Boyd (remote)
Mr M Cameron (remote)
Mr L Fraser
Mr A Graham
Mrs M Paterson
Ms M Smith

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar:

Mr M K MacDonald (substitute)
(remote)
Mr G Murray (remote)

In attendance:

Mr F Finlayson, Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Mr R Christie, Depute Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer
Ms J Johnston, Trainee Accountant, Treasurer's Office (remote)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Clerk's office
Mrs K Arnott, Committee Officer, Clerk's office

Also in attendance:-

Ms E Scoburgh, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland (remote)
Mr D Fraser, Auditor, Audit Scotland
Mr L McEwan, Trainee Auditor, Audit Scotland (remote)

Mr L Fraser in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms J McEwan and Mr D Crichton.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were none.

With the consent of Members, items 9 & 10 on the agenda were taken at this point on the agenda.

9. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntas Coinneamh

The had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of 20 November, 2024, the terms of which were **Approved**.

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

Members were reminded that should they wish flights arranged for them for travel to the next meeting of the Board on 10 June, 2025 in Stornoway, then they should contact the Clerk's office as soon as possible so that flights can be booked.

3. Proposed Revenue Budget 2025 Buidseat Teachd-a-Steach 2025 ga Mholadh

There was circulated Report No. VAL/1/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which set out for approval a proposed revenue budget for financial years 2025/26 to 2027/28. The figures for 2026/27 and 2027/28 were indicative at this stage and will be reviewed when setting the budget in future years.

Following commentary on the report from the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer, information was sought on the substantial increase in salaries and impact on national insurance on the budget. It was advised that the increase in salaries included assumed 3% pay awards over the next 3 years; staff progression incurring more salary costs and an increase in Employers national insurance contributions. The budget proposed was based on a full complement of staff and changes in respect of managing the audit of self-catering units. Recruitment challenges and attempts to fill vacancies were highlighted, particularly taking on trainees for Valuer posts. Apprenticeship training would also be considered.

Reference was made to the significant workload pressures on the service, particularly with the revaluation process and self-catering unit audits. 30% of all self-catering units in Scotland were in the Highland and Western Isles area and therefore the Assessor proposed staffing changes and would consider changes to the process of self-catering unit audits to manage this increase in workload. No additional monies were being requested for this and changes would be managed within the proposed budget.

The Board **Approved** the proposed budget for 2025/26.

4. Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement 2024/25 Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-Steach 2024/25

There was circulated Report No VAL/2/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which set out the revenue monitoring position of the Board for the period to 31 December, 2024 and the projected year end position.

In particular, it was highlighted that ICT charges for the year had yet to be billed; the move to a new financial system was still in the settling in period and overall the revenue budget was as expected for the period.

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

5. Departmental Report Aithisg Roinneil

There was circulated Report No VAL/3/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which outlined the main business of the department since the last meeting.

There was a summary of the report by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer. In particular, it was highlighted that under Section 24 of the Non-Domestic Rates

(Scotland) Act 2020 a Board were required to report on the number of assessors and availability of resources based on the position as at 1 April, 2025. The report required to go before the Scottish Parliament by the end of May 2025. The period for the report lies between Board meetings and as such a format for producing the report prior to 31 May 2025 needed to be agreed.

Consideration was given to the format and content in the report to the Scottish Parliament. Other Valuation Boards were in the same position with this new reporting and had the opportunity to raise similar themes and concerns in the report.

Due to the timeframe for submission of the report (prior to the next Board meeting), it was suggested that the report be compiled by the Assessor in conjunction with other officers of the Board, as appropriate, and shared with Board Members. It would then be delegated to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer in consultation with the Convener and Depute Convener to submit the final report. The outcome would be reported back to the next Board meeting.

The Board:-

- i **Noted** the recent activities of the department as set out in the report; and
- ii **Agreed** it be delegated to the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer in consultation with the Convener and Depute Convener to submit the final report on the number of assessors and availability of resources to the Scottish Parliament by end of May, 2025. The final report would be submitted to the next Board meeting for information.

6. Counter Fraud Policy Poileasaidh an Aghaidh Foille

There was circulated Report No. VAL/4/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which presented an updated Counter Fraud Policy for the Boards consideration. The policy formed part of the Board's governance arrangements and aimed to ensure that the Board's resources are used for their intended purpose and that any losses through fraud and corruption are minimised.

The Depute Assessor and ERO expanded on the main updates to the policy, such as sections on Theft and Bribery and emphasising that all employees have a responsibility for ensuring that fraud risks are identified, considered and managed as part of the Board's risk management arrangements.

In response to a query, it was advised that in the event of fraud, advice would be sought from Highland Council's Officers as to whether the matter should be reported to the Police.

The Board **Approved** the Counter Fraud Policy.

7. Flexitime Scheme Sgeama Uairean Sùbailte

There was circulated Report No. VAL/5/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which provided an updated flexitime scheme for staff. The Assessor provided an overview of the policy, which staff and trade unions had been consulted on. The scheme would allow staff to have an element of flexibility over their working hours. For

example, the policy would provide flexibility for staff working hours who relied on public transport to get to and from work or staff undertaking surveys could leave earlier and arrive back later, thereby avoiding the need for an overnight stay.

The Board **Approved** the updated Flexitime Scheme.

8. Annual Audit Plan 2024/25 Plana Sgrùdaidh Bliadhnail 2024/25

There was circulated Report No. VAL/6/25 by the External Auditor, Audit Scotland setting out the 2024/25 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 2024/25 audit.

Following a summary of the report by the Auditor, Audit Scotland, a point was made that it was encouraging that the audit fee this year was a small increase of 1.9%, compared to the previous two years, where the audit fee had seen significant increases. It was hoped that in future any increase in audit fee would be competitive to other providers of this service.

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

11. 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 item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

12. Departmental Logo Suaicheantas Roinneil

There was circulated to Members only Report No. VAL/7/25 by the Assessor and Electoral Registration Officer which set out the steps taken to produce a departmental logo and branding to display the service's separate identity from its constituent councils.

Following feedback from Members at the last Board meeting, a further meeting was held with the supplier to fine tune the design, and if possible, include Gaelic within it. The report showed other designs supplied and the preferred design for the Board's consideration.

A branding to reflect the geographical area was proving to be difficult, given the length of the Board's title, which also was to be displayed in Gaelic. Members provided comments on the design and generally felt more work to fine tune the Board's title in the design was required. It was suggested that assistance with the design from other agencies should be sought.

The Board **Agreed** that the departmental logo would be further reviewed with a report back to a future meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11.30 am.



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd
na Gàidhealtachd

Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board held in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, and via Microsoft Teams, on Friday 21 February 2025 at 10.00 am.

Present:

The Highland Council:

Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chair of Communities and Place Committee
Derek Brown, Chief Executive

Highlands and Islands Enterprise:

Eann Sinclair, Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland (also representing Caithness Community Partnership) (remote)

NHS Highland:

Sarah Compton-Bishop, Chair, NHS Highland Board
Tim Allison, Director of Public Health

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

Miles Stubbs, Group Commander (substitute)

Community Partnership representative:

Eann Sinclair, Chair of Caithness Community Partnership (also representing HIE) (remote)

High Life Highland:

Steve Walsh, Chief Executive

Highland Third Sector Interface:

Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer (remote)

NatureScot:

Graham Neville, Head of Operations - North

Skills Development Scotland:

Roddy Bailey, Area Manager (remote)

University of the Highlands and Islands:

Vicki Nairn, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, UHI

In attendance:

Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council (remote)
Malcolm MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive – Place, The Highland Council
Fiona Duncan, Chief Officer - Health and Social Care, The Highland Council (remote)
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Delivery Group
Cathy Steer, Chair, Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group
James Maybee, Chair, Community Justice Partnership (remote)

Carron McDiarmid, Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (remote)
Gail Prince, Partnership Development Manager
Rhiannon Boydell, Head of Service, Community Directorate, NHS Highland
Superintendent Jen Valentine, Police Scotland
Melanie Murray, Principal Committee Officer, The Highland Council

Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Raymond Bremner, Stuart Black, Fiona Davies and Michael Humphreys.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Meetings

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Partnership Board – 4 December 2024;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 17 September 2024; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 19 November 2024.

4. Action Tracker

The Board was asked to review progress of its agreed actions as set out in the Action Tracker which had been circulated.

In relation to Cost of Living Workshop Feedback and the proposal to invite a representative of Social Security Scotland to a future meeting of the Board, it was explained that a follow-up meeting had taken place and, given Social Security Scotland were actively involved in the Poverty Reduction Delivery Group, officers were content that the action could be removed from the Action Tracker. The remaining actions had either been completed or were the subject of later items on the agenda.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the Action Tracker and the update provided; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the action to invite a representative of Social Security Scotland to a future meeting of the Board be removed from the Action Tracker.

5. Presentation: Highland Property Partnership

The Assistant Chief Executive – Place, The Highland Council, gave a presentation which provided an overview of the Connecting People and Spaces theme within the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) Delivery Plan; the Highland Property Partnership, which comprised the five statutory partners and other key public sector agencies with the

aim of working together to deliver strategic property asset management across Highland; the Council's Highland Investment Plan and the associated masterplanning approach and priority activity; and partnership asks including partner commitment to and engagement with the Highland Property Partnership, alignment between the property approach and service delivery requirements, and willingness for radical change.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- in relation to the approach to sharing property and assets, it was queried whether intelligence should be considered a partnership asset and whether a co-located intelligence hub with partners from across the CPP might better support the HOIP. Particular reference was made to public protection and the potential, through relevant partners working more closely together, to see linkages and escalate risks more quickly. Given people could access their organisation's network to work from home it was presumed they could work from any office together, and even if that was done on a part-time basis it would lead to benefits. Further discussion ensued, during which it was explained that conversations around data-sharing were underway between the Council and NHS Highland, details of which were provided. It was commented that whilst an integrated/co-located team could potentially be implemented, the full benefits would not be realised until issues in terms of partners' data-sharing protocols were addressed. It was added that data foundations were key, and the Council and NHS Highland were undertaking joint work in that regard. Other Board Members spoke to opportunities for data-sharing around education and skills, and to utilise UHI's network of learning centres;
- UHI Headquarters had moved to UHI House and was now co-located with NHS Highland, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and other organisations, which had led to a more enabling and vibrant culture and allowed access to buildings and facilities that would otherwise be unaffordable. It was added that the now empty building at Ness Walk might offer opportunities in terms of the Highland Property Partnership;
- linked to earlier comments, co-location was not only about making better use of space but about integrating service delivery, and it was important, when coming together in partnership spaces, to be mindful of the service delivery requirements and opportunities for change;
- the importance of focusing on outcomes was emphasised;
- there was approximately £70m of unclaimed benefits in Highland, including £6.9m unclaimed pension credits, and if the recovery of some of that income for people could be targeted it would be an outcome in itself as well as having other parallel benefits;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how well the co-location/sharing approach worked at Scottish Government level, during which it was explained that good progress had been made, and the Scottish Government appeared to be looking across the whole public service estate from a place-based perspective rather than looking at individual organisations. This was something the Scottish Government Place Director was sighted on, which was welcomed;
- it was necessary to embody best practice and take a mission-based approach;
- the Council had committed, in the Highland Investment Plan and the Highland Housing Challenge, to find solutions, both independently and in partnership with the private sector, to financing some of the large capital builds needed that could be genuinely transformational;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the scope of the co-location approach extended to third sector and private sector organisations;
- there had been instances where co-location had not gone smoothly, particularly during school hours, and it was queried whether the learning from such instances had been

taken into consideration and how it informed what proposals were potentially going to go forward;

- it was queried whether impact assessment was built into the process to ensure it was understood whether there were different impacts on different groups within communities; and
- what worked in Inverness would not work in other areas of Highland, and the Head of Operations – North reaffirmed NatureScot’s support for a place-based approach;

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Presentation: Visitor Levy Consultation

The Assistant Chief Executive – Place, The Highland Council, gave a presentation on the Visitor Levy consultation that was currently underway, during which information was provided on the visitor economy; the legislative background; the timeline for the consultation; the proposed Visitor Levy Scheme; links to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy; and how partners could help by raising awareness of the consultation and encouraging participation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- feedback from the third sector was that people could see the value in a levy being applied if they could understand what it was going to be invested in. There was a degree of cynicism that it was going to be used to plug public sector funding gaps. However, a firm assurance was provided that that was not the case;
- there were a number of national third sector organisations that employed staff who were required to travel around Scotland. If there were no exemptions for people who had to come to Highland to stay for work it was yet another additional cost, and it was suggested this could be looked at. It was added that the third sector was not receiving any assistance in relation to national increases. In response, it was explained that, in terms of the legislation, a transient visitor levy included those who arrived in the area for work, and the point raised could be fed into the consultation. The Chair of the Council’s Communities and Place Committee, Councillor Graham MacKenzie, added that he was certain Elected Members and officers would be looking carefully at possible exemptions when the consultation period was over, and he emphasised the importance of encouraging as many people as possible to respond to the consultation;
- a key part of supporting, sustaining and developing tourism was helping communities determine their tourism offering and promoting things such as ecotourism, and there might be opportunities for the third sector in terms of sources of investment;
- concern was expressed regarding the disproportionate impact on those who lived in remote and rural areas of Highland who needed to travel to Inverness to go to court or hospital. People in the justice system tended to be the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in society, and there was an issue in terms of keeping people safe, particularly if they had mental health issues;
- there would be groups of individuals who would not respond to the consultation, and the importance of remembering the unheard voices was emphasised;
- the Inverness Castle Experience was cited as an example of the Council’s commitment to reinvest in tourism;
- the term “visitor levy” was not entirely accurate as some people were not visitors but were simply moving around Highland;
- not all the income from a visitor levy would come from tourists, and it would be helpful to have clarity, not only on what it would be spent on but on which sources it had come from;

- the proposed levy was not just about tourism but about helping communities cope with the impact of tourism; and
- all the facilities that were available to tourists were also used by communities and, if the levy went ahead, it was necessary to consider how to maximise opportunities for local communities to use such facilities to be more active and improve mental health and wellbeing.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

7. HOIP Core Priority Update: Community Wealth Building

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/1/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, The Highland Council.

A detailed discussion took place, during which the following main points were raised:

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed there would be no threat to existing community-specific benefit schemes;
- it was queried what opportunities were envisioned for improved engagement with communities by energy suppliers, as communities were not satisfied with some of the engagement already taking place. In that regard, it was confirmed the Council was appointing three additional staff to engage with communities and support them to engage with developers;
- whilst in agreement with leveraging additional investment, concern was expressed regarding the additional funding remaining in the control of public agencies and sitting at regional level which, it was suggested, contradicted the concept of community wealth building. It was added that, even with community representatives on board, there was not a “Highland community” that could be adequately represented at that level;
- from a third sector perspective, it was disappointing that this was the first opportunity to feed into the Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment since it had last been discussed at the CPP Board;
- information was sought, and provided, on whether any work was being undertaken in terms of an impact assessment looking at what might happen if current investment shifted. Particular reference was made to the health and social care community hubs in Sutherland, a number of which were in receipt of windfarm monies, and it was questioned if it was understood what would happen if that funding was to change;
- whilst support was expressed for the concept of a shared project bank, examples were provided of issues that had arisen where similar initiatives had been implemented, and it was suggested there was work to be done around the practicalities;
- it was necessary to take on board the feedback on how Highland was performing in relation to human rights, and disappointment was expressed that there was not a response to the report by the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) on the agenda. The Chair confirmed this was on the proposed list of items for the June meeting. It was added that whilst the SHRC report identified a number of issues, it did not include what actions were already being undertaken to address some of the issues. The critical thing for the CPP was to identify where the gaps were and that would be the basis of the report to the June Board, with input from various partnership groups and individual organisations;
- a lot of reassurance was needed to alleviate the concerns of the third sector regarding the proposed Strategic Community Benefit Fund;
- if there was not lasting legacy from the huge amount of investment coming into Highland as a result of onshore energy developments, SSE’s spend on grid capacity,

and the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, the CPP had not done its job, and the Charter was a means of managing that;

- it was only fair that monies that came from energy developments in Highland were spent in Highland. However, other Board Members added that it was a matter of how the monies were spent and the governance and decision-making process. The decision-making process sitting with an independent source whereby proposals could be appraised on an equal footing would be exciting and would fit better with the concept of community wealth building;
- whilst protecting the current level of investment in communities was welcomed, it was questioned how effectively communities themselves were using the funding and whether there was scope to explore what the Charter could leverage in in terms of a more effective and equal process;
- in terms of the pipeline of development proposals, it was a source of frustration that what community benefit would be achieved was not a material planning consideration and technically competent projects were being approved where the developer was not engaging with the Social Value Charter. It was suggested this point be raised in the response to the Scottish Government consultation, and that it was necessary to use whatever leverage was available to ensure that projects were being put forward with a good impact in terms of community benefit;
- it was important to be able to move quickly in the renewables space, and ensure that investment models were structured in at an early stage;
- the Charter was about leverage and using the collective power of the public sector to negotiate with developers, and fairness needed to be the driving principle;
- the Council's Chief Officer – Housing and Communities undertook to share the Council's draft response to the Scottish Government consultation on community benefit to aid responses and contributions to the CPP response. It was also confirmed that HIE's draft response would be circulated following approval by the HIE Board; and
- in terms of where and how to continue the conversation on some of the points raised, particularly the views of the third sector regarding the governance of the additional funding, it was suggested that the Highlands and Islands Community Wealth Building Group would be the appropriate forum, and the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities undertook to liaise with the Chief Officer, HTSI, in that regard.

The Board:-

- i. **AGREED** the next steps around the implementation of the Social Value Charter for Renewables Investment;
- ii. **NOTED** the broader update on the Community Wealth Building HOIP priority;
- iii. **AGREED** that a CPP response to the Scottish Government's community benefit consultation be collated and circulated for comment with the final response being agreed in consultation with the Chair; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Council and HIE's draft responses would be circulated to partners to aid responses and contributions.

8. Developing the Care for People Response

At its meeting on 4 December 2024, the Board had agreed that the Care for People proposals be reviewed to ensure they reflected recent structural changes within the Council and there was clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities, and that they be brought back to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

In that regard, there had been circulated Report No CPPB/2/25 by Superintendent Jen Valentine, Police Scotland.

During discussion, it was highlighted that there might be further changes going forward as a result of the cessation of the Lead Agency model. In response to a question, it was confirmed that progress in terms of implementation of the proposals could be reported to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board **APPROVED** the proposals as outlined in section 3.1 of the report.

9. Creating Hope in Highland Together - Interim Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/3/25 by Superintendent Jen Valentine, Police Scotland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- Board Members commended all those involved for the significant amount of work taking place as detailed in the report and Action Plan. Particular thanks were expressed to Superintendent Valentine for her leadership;
- information was sought, and provided, as to confidence that all partners were fully on board and embedding the objectives in the Action Plan into their daily practice;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that a representative of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership sat on the Suicide Prevention Steering Group. It was suggested there were opportunities to explore further in terms of links between some deaths by suicide and alcohol and drugs;
- it was highlighted that an event was scheduled to take place in Lorn and Islands Hospital, Oban, on 9 May 2025 looking at the lessons learned from different types of death, including death by suicide, with the aim of preventing future deaths;
- whilst it was recognised that work was at an early stage, it was important that the potential for a Community Wellbeing Centre for people in crisis was fed into the Highland Property Partnership discussions;
- the importance of ensuring the Community Justice Partnership was aware of the suicide prevention work taking place was emphasised;
- the overlap between suicide prevention, crisis intervention and support and some of the communication work taking place had been recognised and these matters were brought together at the Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group. It had also been recognised that it was necessary to share some of the learning and the progress that had been made, and it was intended to hold an event in that regard later in the year; and
- suicide prevention was an area of work where there was excellent partnership engagement. In that regard, reference was made to the work taking place looking at utilising capacity across partners to deliver a prospectus of mental health and wellbeing training, including suicide prevention training.

The Board **NOTED** the progress of the Action Plan.

10. Contest Board Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/4/25 by Superintendent Jen Valentine, Police Scotland.

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the report and Highland activity in relation to CONTEST.

At this stage, the Chair highlighted that it was Superintendent Valentine's final meeting of the Board as she was moving on to a new role within Police Scotland. On behalf of the Board, she

expressed thanks to Superintendent Valentine for her contribution to the CPP and congratulated her on her new role.

11. Partnership Development Team Quarterly Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/5/25 by the Partnership Development Manager and CPP Senior Officers.

In addition to the report, reference was made to previous discussions regarding the status of the Partnership Development Team, and it was confirmed that the two Partnership Officer posts had been extended for a further two years.

Having welcomed the continuation of the Partnership Officer posts and commended the significant amount of work taking place, the Board **NOTED** the updated Year 2 Milestones in Appendix 1 of the report.

12. Review of Strategic Risk Register

The Strategic Risk Register had been circulated for consideration and review, having been further amended based on the discussions at the Board on 4 December 2024.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- given the earlier discussions around data-sharing, it was suggested that the risk appetite in respect of risk 04/20 (Joint Situational Awareness – Information Sharing) be reviewed and that consideration be given to a Risk Management Plan to improve data-sharing across partner organisations. It was added that the deluge of information-sharing guidance had had a negative impact in terms of organisations working in silos, and a collective gathering with a view to streamlining data-sharing processes would be welcomed; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed, as agreed at the previous meeting, that work was underway in terms of reviewing the partnership's risks and setting the risk appetite. It was explained that the Council had developed a new risk analysis framework which it was intended to use to review the Risk Register and align it with the HOIP.

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the revised Strategic Risk Register; and
- ii. **AGREED** that risk 04/20 (Joint Situational Awareness – Data Sharing) be reviewed, taking into account the points raised during discussion on data-sharing.

13. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 6 June 2025 at 2.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 12.00 noon.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Redesign Board of the Highland Council** held in Committee Rooms 1 & 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 5 June 2025 at 2pm.

Members present:

Mr B Boyd
Mr R Bremner
Mr J Edmonson (substitute for Mr Christie)
Mrs M Cockburn
Mr M Green
Mr P Oldham (substitute for Mrs Hendry)
Ms B Jarvie
Mr R Jones

Mr J Finlayson (substitute for Mr Lobban)
Mr K Gowans (substitute for Mr MacKenzie)
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs T Robertson
Ms L Saggars
Mr J Gibson, UNISON
Mrs C A Stewart, GMB

Non-Members present:

Ms S Atkin
Mr J Bruce
Mr R Gale
Ms M Hutchison
Ms L Johnston

Ms E Knox
Ms K MacLean
Mr T MacLennan
Mr D Millar
Ms M Ross

Participating Officials:

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive, Place
Ms A Clark, Chief Officer, Housing and Communities
Mrs S Armstrong, Chief Officer - Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer, Business Solutions
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr M Baird, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs J Hendry, Mr D Fraser, Mr B Lobban, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, and Mr D McDonald.

2. Declarations of Interest

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were none.

3. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

The Board **NOTED** the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2025, which had been approved by the Council on 27 March 2025.

4. Redesign of Highland Council – Work Programme Update **Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas às Ùr mun Phrògram Obrach**

There was circulated Report No RDB/03/25 by the Chief Officer, Business Solutions.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- Members were urged to complete the Food In Schools survey which had been emailed to them;
- it was suggested further work was required with regard to the range of food available to school pupils, and to the range of places for the children to eat their food, with some finding canteens or halls too noisy. Covered outdoor shelters would be beneficial;
- it was important any good practice in one school was shared;
- noting that a significant amount of fruit was wasted in school canteens, it was suggested that bowls of fruit could be placed on tables or at canteen exit points to encourage uptake;
- at a recent secondary school parent council meeting it had been suggested that on some Friday afternoons, when the school was closed, school kitchens could be used by senior pupils for inter-generational events, providing a warm space and nutritious food; and
- it was reported that some schools in Perthshire were not offering many meat options and assurance was sought that this was not the case in Highland. The Highland school meal menu would be circulated to Members.

The Board **NOTED** the work programme update.

5. Roads Redesign Phase 2 **Ath-dhealbhadh Rathaid Ìre 2**

There was circulated Report No RDB/04/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- with regard to temporary road traffic orders and abnormal load notifications, assurance was sought and provided that in relation to the move to a digital cloud system, a review would be undertaken of the out-dated consultation process;
- assurance was sought that in relation to Phase 2, all staff were appropriately trained to use the most up to date technology and the changes did not impact the core functions of the roads teams, noting the importance of a planned programme of road maintenance;
- concerns about particular roads should be brought up with local Members and the relevant Area Roads Manager; and
- issues raised at roads revenue and capital workshops required further consideration during phase 2 to continue with the work outlined in section 6.3 of the report, with concern expressed at the scheme prioritisation situation. A further challenging workshop to tackle the outstanding issues was anticipated, to facilitate the Redesign Board advising the Council on how to reshape future services. All Members were urged to participate in the process, including consideration of the current budget distribution system.

The Board **NOTED** the Road Improvement Project – Phase 2 Report.

6. Amenities Review; Future Operating Model

Ath-sgrùdadh Ghoireasan; Modail Obrachaidh Teachdail

There was circulated Report No RDB/05/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report, the following issues were raised:

- clarification was sought and provided that consideration would be given to reviewing what work was no longer required;
- with reference to specific funding that had been provided from the amenities and the ward discretionary budget for a project in Tain and Easter Ross, attention was drawn to the move in future to a 'one council' approach, and to the benefits of aligning the roads and amenities budgets;
- the importance of a single point of access was emphasised, to reduce the frustration of communities and others when trying to contact the Council, which could be complex and confusing. Members expressed their desire to have a comprehensive organisation chart or similar, showing specific contact details, and that such information would also be helpful to the public on the new website. It was also pointed out that Members were not always kept informed when key members of staff left the Council;
- the Council was urged to provide permanent employment wherever possible, rather than temporary or seasonal employment;
- it was hoped that more precise timetables for each project would be provided at the next meeting;
- the Council should ensure staff working outdoors were informed of the dangers of tick bites and provided with appropriate tick removal tools and training;
- in order to reduce the number of Freedom of Information requests, it was suggested that responses should be published on the Council's new website (to minimise repeated requests), along with more information on the topics that were commonly the subject of FOIs. Information was sought and provided on where FOI requests typically originated; and
- the challenges around instigating changes of practice in communities were highlighted, and schools were suggested as a useful means of communicating with communities. Grass-cutting, woodland, the use of wild flowers, weedkiller usage and other amenities issues were referenced and needed to be part of the wider vision.

The Board **NOTED** the:

- i. establishment of a project team;
- ii. appointment of an APSE Associate as Project Manager; and
- iii. anticipated timescales and estimated date for completion.

The meeting ended at 3pm.

**The Highland Council
Chief Officer Recruitment Panel**

Minutes of Meeting of the Chief
Officer Recruitment Panel held in
Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart
Road, Inverness on Tuesday 17
June 2025 at 9.00a.m.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr J Finlayson
Mr R Gale (substitute)
Mr K Gowans

Mr A Graham (substitute)
Mr B Lobban

Officials in attendance:-

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive, Place
Mrs L McGunnigle, HR Manager, Corporate

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie, Mrs T Robertson and Mr R Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

The Panel **NOTED** that there were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

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 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.

4. Appointment of Chief Officer Operations and Maintenance and Chief Officer Planning and Economic Development

There had been circulated to Members only the undernoted documents.

- a) Shortlist note for Chief Officer Place posts;
- b) Interview timetable;
- c) Chief Officer Operations & Maintenance and Chief Officer Planning & Economic Development job descriptions and person specifications;
- d) copies of the applications submitted by the candidates;
- e) Psychometric feedback reports;
- f) Candidate scoring sheet;
- g) a scenario and interview questions.

The panel proceeded to interview the candidates.

Following consideration, the Panel **appointed:-**

Debbie Sutton to the post of Chief Officer Operations & Maintenance.

The Panel did **not appoint** to the post of Chief Officer Planning & Economic Development.

The meeting ended at 4pm.