

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.