

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 20 November 2025 at 2pm.

Members present:

Mr M Baird	Mrs J Hendry
Mr B Boyd	Ms B Jarvie
Mr R Bremner	Mr B Lobban
Mr D Fraser	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Gale (sub for Mr Christie)	Mrs T Robertson

Non-Members present:

Mr C Ballance	Mrs M Reid
Mrs M Cockburn	Mrs M Ross

Participating Officials:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate
Mrs S Armstrong, Chief Officer - Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr M Bailey, Strategic Lead - Commercialisation
Ms L Lallah, Business Management Analyst
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer, Business Solutions
Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer, Operations & Maintenance
Ms R Fry, Chief Officer – HR and Communications
Mr S Bone, Business Development Lead
Ms A Brown, Programme Manager
Mr B Robertson, Project Manager
Mr R McNab, Service Support Officer
Ms E MacIver, Principal Engineer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Additional Item

At the request of the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Board **AGREED** that Mrs Trish Robertson be appointed as a second Vice Chair to the Board.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms L Saggars, Mr A Christie, Mr S Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr M Green, Mr R Jones, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mr D McDonald, Mr J Gibson, UNISON, and Mrs C A Stewart, GMB.

At the request of the Chair, the Board **AGREED** to contact Group leaders to express concern at the poor attendance and ask that members of the Board arrange a substitute if they were unable to attend meetings of the Board.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were none.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Board **NOTED**:

- i. the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2025, which were approved by the Council on 11 December 2025; and
- ii. that Mr Ballance had been in attendance at the meeting on 20 November 2025, but was not listed on the sederunt.

4. “Go-live” of the New Website An Làrach-lìn Ùr “a’ Dol Beò”

A verbal update on the “go-live” of the new website was provided by the Chief Officer – Business Solutions, as follows:

- the new website launched on 17 February 2026, involving the creation of 71 function home pages, testing of 120 specific user journeys, updating and rewriting of nearly 4,500 pages, new functionality to provide information on school closures, and new accessibility and search tools;
- a working group had been set up with Service representatives, chaired by the Chief Officer (Business Solutions), to monitor the website to ensure it stayed current and evolved as the landscape changed;
- as expected with such a significant change, there had been some teething troubles, most significantly with the search functionality built into the new website and external Google search of the content. Most of the search issues had been resolved and remaining broken links were being investigated;
- useful feedback had been received including from Members; and
- looking forward, the immediate focus was on moving from project support to a sustainable business-as-usual support model, to include the provision of clear guidance to web authors and editors, and an accreditation scheme to ensure that staff who were approving content for publishing in Services were trained and fully aware of the publishing standards. The team would also be looking to migrate various satellite websites to the new platform.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- efforts to ensure continuity of communication with groups who regularly contacted the Council, with particular reference to Community Councils was queried, as was whether consideration had been given to holding an open training session for Members and Community Councils, similar in design to the budget consultation process. Attention was drawn to forthcoming Community Council events at which website feedback and further training needs could be considered;
- it was queried what communication was being undertaken to inform the public how their feedback was being taken on board;

- assurance was provided that content on the old website was being kept for six months to provide to time to identify content that required archiving. Work on this was being undertaken with the archivist, with particular reference to reports that had been considered by archived committees;
- it was explained that Google search was taking some time to catch up with the new website and was still proving links to the old site on occasion;
- information was sought and provided on plans to implement interactive online council tax, including the ability for customers to track progress of requests made online. This tied into work being undertaken on the customer journey; and
- the team working on the new website were thanked for their work, and attention was drawn to the budget underspend of £11k against the total agreed 3-year budget of £500k.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

5. My Council Programme Prògram na Comhairle Agam

There was circulated Report No RDB/01/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- as the main goal of the programme was to improve customer management and relations, with a more consistent, standardised approach, consideration should be given to running a trial period during which this could be assessed, prior to seeking Council sign-off. It was then proposed that the approach should be one of continuous review rather than running a trial, noting the size of the organisation and the need to embed cultural change;
- the importance of facilitating digital feedback to the public on issues and queries raised was emphasised, and attention was drawn to the asset management system having become cloud-based, with work being undertaken to link it to the CRM system;
- the challenges for staff in dealing with members of the public were acknowledged; and
- it was suggested that once the programme was ready for sign-off by the Board, the matter be presented to the Council via the Redesign Board minutes, with a proposal for an update report after a specific period of time.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the updates against the My Council programme;
- ii. **NOTED** the launch of the new website on 17 February 2026; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a progress report would be presented to the Redesign Board on 19 November 2026.

6. Amenities Review and Roads Improvement Project 2 Pròiseact Ath-sgrùdadh Ghoireasan agus Leasachadh Rathaidean 2

There was circulated Report No RDB/02/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- attention was drawn to the usual approach to understanding the work of a Redesign Board sub-group to ensure all parties were adequately involved in the process, for example using a lean or swot analysis model to build a project that would be subject to corporate and Board involvement. This approach facilitated improved Member understanding of variables and allowed projects to move at pace and with flexibility. Assurance was provided on this, and that research was being undertaken with other local authorities to consider their approach. There was a focus on creating one new service;
- the need to ensure the correct use of equipment, and appropriate training, was emphasised, with the example provided of grass cutting vehicles being driven too fast;
- assurance was sought and provided that consideration was being given to the cost effectiveness of hiring versus purchasing tools and equipment; and
- with regard to the use of machinery, including the five pothole pro machines, and other similar issues, attention was drawn to the value of the joint working between officers and Members that was facilitated by the Redesign Board, particularly the workshops. Officers and Members were encouraged to attend and participate in this unique opportunity to work together.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the updates on the Amenities and Roads Redesign project; and
- ii. **AGREED** to the establishment of a Member/Officer Redesign Working Group covering Roads and Amenities.

7. Food in Schools Project Pròiseact Biadh ann an Sgoiltean

There was circulated Report No RDB/03/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- the £357k savings achieved to date since 2024 was queried and it was explained the majority of this was from increased uptake in school meals;
- assurance was sought and provided that the parental engagement strategy included engagement with parent councils;
- in relation to the review of supplier contracts, the focus on local venison procurement was welcomed. The Chair suggested contacting Cairngorm National Park Authority about the operation of their deer larders, with confirmation provided that engagement was ongoing;
- the lack of seated dining facilities for secondary school pupils limited the range of food that could be provided, and contributed to littering. A summary was provided of a pilot at Inverness High School, following their health and nutrition inspection in November 2025. Menu review focus groups were considering the dining experience and pupil-led initiatives, with one being the use of re-useable containers, with incentive schemes for their return. It was acknowledged that this was easier to manage in smaller schools.

The Board **NOTED** the progress to date.

8. Good Food Nation Plan Plana airson Dùthaich a Tha Math a Thaobh Biadh

There was circulated Report No RDB/04/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, attention was drawn to the plans to establish an officer working groups and it was pointed out that Redesign Board sub or working groups should include Members, and that future reports should detail the membership of any such groups. It was queried what weight would be given to plant-based food issues, but this would be considered in more detail at a later stage. There was a remit from the Scottish Government to consider all food systems and it was pointed out that children should be offered food they were likely to eat to reduce food waste.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that future reports would be considered by the Redesign Board and should contain details of the membership of sub-groups, which should include Members as well as officers.

Closing Remarks

- it was useful for the Board to have a process by which officers and Members could jointly contribute ideas to shape future agendas, and information on projects being worked on, and their timelines and target end dates;
- a forward plan of reviews to be progressed by the Redesign Board, and through Redesign workshops would be provided for consideration, noting the plan would be dynamic in nature to reflect business needs and to ensure ongoing alignment with budget decisions;
- the cross-service working that was undertaken for the roads and amenities review, including area engagement, was a useful model for other sub-groups;
- with reference to the merits of linking the food issues considered earlier in the meeting to the population health framework, it was emphasised that any of the strategic committees could incorporate any of the Redesign projects into their own work plans; and
- the value of the workshops was emphasised, and the input from officer and Members was welcomed.

The Board **NOTED** the comments and **AGREED** a Redesign Board forward plan document, with delivery timelines, would be presented to the Board in June 2026.

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.