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| HIGH LIFE HIGHLAND  REPORT TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS  24 March 2021 | AGENDA ITEM REPORT No HLH/ /21 |

## **CHair/chIEF EXECUTIVE’S UPDATES - Report by Chief Executive**

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| **Summary** The purpose of this report is to provide Directors with information and the opportunity to discuss issues affecting HLH and its work at an early stage.  It is recommended Directors comment on and note the updates. | |
| **1.** | **Business Plan Contribution** |
| 1.1 | This report supports the highlighted Business Outcomes from the High Life Highland (HLH) Business Plan:   1. Sustain a high standard of health and safety, and environmental performance 2. **Implement the Service Delivery Contract with THC** 3. **Improving customer engagement and satisfaction** 4. **Improving staff engagement and satisfaction** 5. **Enhance the positive charity image** 6. Be a trusted and effective partner 7. Achieve sustainable growth across the organisation 8. **Develop health and wellbeing across Highland communities** 9. **Develop and promote the High Life brand** |
| **2.**  2.1  2.2  2.3  2.4  2.5 | **Update from the Chair**  The strategic relationship with THC has steadily improved over the course of recent months. Discussions on the financial difficulties faced by the charity included a briefing by myself and the CE to the Administration group. As the Budget Planning Paper details, the outcome of engagements was a guarantee of financial support to the charity. This was a welcome development and will allow us to concentrate positively on recovery rather than facing the prospect of service cuts.  I have written to the Leader of the Council to acknowledge the recent constructive dialogue with the Council and in particular the positive comments from so many councillor colleagues when we had the opportunity to make the presentation to the Administration Group. I also stressed our commitment to work to support the Council’s transformation proposals.  Directors received an update at the December HLH Board meeting on work to date along with a timescale for approving a revised Business Plan for 2021-25. It was hoped to bring the first draft of the new plan to this meeting, however with a further lockdown being implemented in late December the HLH recovery has stalled, with most HLH staff being placed, and remaining, on furlough. Further work on the revised plan has been postponed meantime and will recommence at an appropriate time following easing of restrictions.  Many of our staff have been on furlough leave for a considerable period of time, others have worked almost non-stop throughout the pandemic. Our people have coped admirably with the constant changes. Indeed, the manner in which some services have continued throughout has been most noteworthy, as has our contribution to the Pandemic across Highland communities. The report on staff Health and Wellbeing on this agenda is most welcome and the measures that we are taking to support our staff will be vital to the ongoing sustainability of the organisation. This will remain a priority as our people return to the workplace over the next few months.  The primary focus now turns yet again to recovery of services in step with the easing of Government restrictions. There is a high likelihood of unanticipated events that need us to act with a combination of agility, resilience and patience. However, the vital lessons learned from our first bounceback will provide a sound foundation as we again deal with the ebb and flow of moving out of the pandemic. Hopefully this recovery will be for the long term, as the vaccination programme takes hold and the new normal evolves. |
| **3.** | **Chief Executive Report** |
| 3.1  3.1.1 | Partnerships – The Highland Council  The recent confirmation that HLH would report to the Education committee has significantly improved the effectiveness of the operational working relationship between the two parties. HLH attendance at the Education Senior Management Team meetings has facilitated collaboration on multiple fronts, most notably: Project Pathfinder (youth strategy work in Caithness); focused Active Schools support during return to school; improved planning for HLH access to school estate; more effective input to Community Learning and Development and support to THC on commercial projects. |
| 3.1.2 | HLH has also continued to support THC in pandemic-related activity. In addition to Active Schools, Youth and Library support, HLH has provided direct support to the following projects: administration of business grants (2.5FTE); support to elections (5FTE); co-ordination and planning of vaccination centres with the MOD (1FTE). |
| 3.1.3  3.1.4 | HLH has made facilities available as vaccination centres on a cost recovery only basis in Beauly, Grantown, Aviemore and Kingussie. This has sometimes included stewarding support and there has been positive feedback on the HLH staff involved. The Corporate Programme Manager has been working for the MoD, THC and NHSH on larger vaccination centres as the volume of vaccinations increase and future centres might include Caol Youth Centre, Fort William and Inverness Leisure. NHSH is using Raigmore Community Centre to deliver its manual handling training.  Discussions are underway with THC about support with facilities management (up to 24FTE) and the planning, co-ordination and potential joint operation of Highland-wide Rapid Testing Centres (level of commitment unknown). These initiatives will be carefully choreographed with the bounceback ii recovery, with a particular focus on any potential impact on income or service delivery. |
| 3.1.5 | Ullapool Emergency - Leisure centres are used as emergency reception centres when required by the Council and emergency services. Lochbroom Leisure Centre, Ullapool was opened early morning on Friday 5 February when 40 people in 20 vehicles were trapped on the A832 at Loch Droma. The leisure centre temporarily accommodated 21 people and staff supported the operation by providing hot food and drinks and arranging accommodation for eight people. All costs were covered by the Council. The incident was over by mid-day on the same day. |
| **4.** | **Partnerships - Inverness City Events and Festivals** |
| 4.1 | Discussions continue with THC officers with respect to the Inverness City Events and Festivals Programme to determine a way forward, with the potential for HLH to engage with THC as a key delivery partner. |
| 4.2 | Although leading such a high-profile series of public events is in many ways an exciting prospect, and in many way creates increased synergies with HLH’s involvement with the Inverness Castle Hill development; in the post-pandemic environment there remains a number of risks associated with the future of events and festivals all of which will be considered and assessed prior to moving forward. |
| 4.3 | HLH has been asked to support colleagues in THC in drafting a report and presenting proposals to the City of Inverness Area Committee in May. |
| 4.4 | Although City of Inverness Area Committee members ringfenced the previous events and festivals budget of £303K therefore limiting any potential financial exposure associated with any service level agreement for HLH, no commitment will be made without first seeking formal approval from the HLH Board. |
| **5.** | **CSE Accreditation** |
| 5.1 | After a week-long assessment in December HLH Libraries have been successful in their reaccreditation for Customer Service Excellence. To achieve the standard, awarded on behalf of the Cabinet Office, services must demonstrate that they understand their customers’ needs; that staff consistently focus on providing good customer service; and that services are of high quality and are easily accessed. |
| 5.2 | As part of the evaluation process, an external assessor visited a selection of libraries virtually, talked to staff and customers and observed HLH libraries in action. All the customers interviewed by the Assessor during the assessment commended the staff and were pleased with the excellent services that evolved in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. |
| 5.3 | In addition to achieving full compliance against all 57 criteria (11 areas of partial compliance are allowed) the service has also been recognised as being sector leading ‘Compliance Plus’, in 21 criteria.  A further 36 areas of good practice were also identified. The full report will be shared with staff and customers on the HLH website. |
| **6.** | **Good Practice** |
| 6.1 | The sports team has continued to provide services on-line including live activities in primary schools and on-line activities and video challenges. The “Wake Up Shake Up” dance class on google meet for schools has proven popular and the on-line challenges set by the active schools team have been particularly noted by sportscotland and shared with active schools teams operating in other local authority areas. On-line activities by the sports team has been an area where staff have worked well with THC which has promoted the activities to schools and directly to parents. |
| **7.** | **Projects – Caithness Horizons** |
| 7.1 | Directors are aware the HLH team has been working in the background to facilitate opening to the public at the earliest opportunity. On opening, the facility will be relaunched as the ***North Coast Visitor Centre*** and will feature a catering offering in line with the new HLH catering strategy. |
| **8.** | **Projects - Highland Future Sports Provision Prioritisation (Infrastructure)** |
| 8.1 | A number of joint meetings have been held between HLH, THC, Sport Scotland, HIE and UHI. The Highland region is a sportscotland development priority, with HLH as the key operational partner. THC is the strategic lead, next steps include THC reviewing the principles for Capital investment (as part of the Highland Economic Recovery Plan) and HLH leading on the impact measures that will be gained from any investment. |
| 8.2 | The overarching principles are to provide first-class facilities, Highland-wide. This in turn, will facilitate participation at an affordable price for all, regardless of age or status. Good facilities will also allow young elite Highland-based athletes to achieve their potential in the place that they work, study and live, reducing out-migration to the Central belt and other areas with better facilities. |
| **9.** | **Damage - Nairn Leisure Centre** |
| 9.1 | As Directors were informed at the time, there was a burst pipe in Nairn Leisure Centre on 14 February which caused a small electrical fire. The fire damage was limited to a circuit breaker panel and cables with the water damage having affected the reception and fitness suite areas. The Council has approved the repair work and appointed a project manager to oversee the work. While the Council has not been able to give a firm date, it is expected that it will be complete before 26 April (the anticipated date of the introduction of level 3 COVID-19 restrictions). |
| **10.** | **Tain Campus** |
| 10.1 | THC has recently announced plans for the new Tain Campus. The plans do not include a swimming pool or any leisure facilities other than gym space at present. It will be vital to discuss the future of the TRACC facility during and after the construction of the new school. TRACC scheduled maintenance has been deferred for a number of years on the premise that a new facility was potentially part of the Campus project. Discussions have commenced with respect to ensuring that the future of TRACC is considered as part of the Tain Campus project. |
| **11.** | **Bellfield Park** |
| 11.1 | Due to a number of factors outwith the control of HLH, the operations at Bellfield Park will be taken in-house. This includes the café kiosk and direct relationship with concession arrangements (Bellfield Tennis Club and the cycle hire shop). The intention is to expand the catering strategy to improve the offer at the park, utilise Botanic Gardens expertise to improve the general presentation of the park and hold events in the park bandstand throughout the summer season. Access to the T  tennis courts will also be available to High Life members. |
| **12.** | **Transformation** |
| 12.1 | Discussion has been ongoing with THC with respect to asset rationalisation and carbon reduction programmes. HLH has made significant progress with carbon reduction through utilisation of SALIX funding, delivering over £58K in savings to THC to date (see **Appendix A**). It is anticipated that shared resources with THC will be made available in FY’s 21/22 and 22/23 to enable HLH to further develop its asset management strategy to allow facilities, where possible, to be considered for disposal through co-location and or new build school provision and shared services. One of the first steps will be to analyse the survey currently being undertaken to cater for new ways of working. The pandemic has changed the scope for remote working irreversibly and our return to office work needs to transform accordingly. |
| 12.2 | Understandably, there will need to be a financial commitment from THC to support these rationalisation proposals, or if necessary, support the ongoing utilities, maintenance and fabric improvements necessary within any remaining facilities. |
| **13.** | **Implications** |
| 13.1 | Resource Implications – there are no additional resource implications arising from this report. |
| 13.2 | Legal Implications - there are no new legal implications arising from this report. |
| 13.3 | Equality Implications – there are no new equality implications arising from this report. |
| 13.4 | Risk Implications – there are no new risk implications arising from this report. |

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| **Recommendations** It is recommended Directors comment on and note the updates. |

Designation: Chief Executive

Date: 12 March 2021

**Appendix A**

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| **HLH Salix Projects** | **Energy Saving (kwh)** | **Total Savings**  **(£/Annum)** | **Status** | **Completion Date** |
| Ullapool Leisure Centre (Lochbroom) | 22,454 | £4,373.54 | **Completed** | **18-Sep-20** |
| Craig Mclean Centre | 9,490 | £1,806.20 | **Completed** | **10-Jul-20** |
| Badenoch Leisure Centre | 12,634 | £4,505.52 | **Completed** | **28-Aug-20** |
| Strathpeffer Community Centre | 16,317 | £3,885.32 | **Completed** | **27-Nov-20** |
| North Coast Leisure | 2,515 | £361.78 | **In Progress** | N/A |
| Golspie Swimming Pool | 6,358 | £924.58 | **Completed** | **23-Dec-20** |
| Inverness Leisure - Sports Hall | 137,603 | £25,190.57 | **In Progress** | N/A |
| Averon Leisure Centre | 84,461 | £13,702.59 | **Completed** | **17-Jan-20** |
| Inverness Leisure Carpark | 13,547 | £1,986.84 | **Completed** | **29-Aug-20** |
| **Totals** | **305,379** | **£56,736.95** |  | |

Other Proposed HLH Sites include:

* Claggan Park
* Black Isle Leisure Centre (exterior)
* Lochbroom Leisure Centre (outdoor sports area)
* Thurso Swimming Pool (exterior walls and car park lighting)

(These have yet to be surveyed and therefore lack the data to model carbon/financial savings.)