

BOARD MINUTE

25 November 2024

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

APPROVED



BOARD MEETING COINNEAMH BÙIRD

MINUTE OF THE EXTRA HIE BOARD MEETING HELD ONLINE ON MONDAY 25 NOVEMBER, STARTING AT 2.00 PM

PRESENT

Alistair Dodds (*Chair*)
Angus Campbell (*Deputy Chair*)
Stuart Black (*Chief Executive*)
Allan Clow
Simon Cotton
Freda Newton
Keith Nicholson
Ailsa Raeburn
Anna Salgado
David Wilson

IN ATTENDANCE

Sandra Dunbar	Director of Business Improvement and Internal Audit
Rachel Hunter	Director of Enterprise and Community Support
Martin Johnson	Director of Strategy and Regional Economy
Karen Moncrieff	Director of Human Resources
David Oxley	Director of Strategic Projects
Joanna Peteranna	Director of Area Operations
Chris Roberts	Head of Communications
Andrew Carton	Team Leader (HIE), Enterprise Agency Sponsorship, Scottish Government
Lorna Gregson-MacLeod	Head of Planning and Partnerships
Alison Sharp	Corporate Planner
Andrew Sarjeant	Head of Corporate Data and Analytics
Janie Sheridan	Head of Business Transformation

1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to this extra meeting which had been arranged to consider HIE's progress towards delivering primary measures and the organisation's performance against its best value plan halfway through financial year 2024/25.

Apologies had been received from Melanie Collett and Calum Ross.

2 Half-year review 2024/25

The Head of Planning and Partnerships presented the half-year review 2024/25, recording progress made in delivering HIE's Strategy and Operating Plan across the Highlands and Islands in the period from 1 April to 30 September 2024.

The review described the economic context in which HIE is operating and detailed actions undertaken by the agency across the four strategic pillars of people, place, planet and prosperity and cross-cutting themes of net zero, fair and inclusive growth, and regional transformational opportunities.

Performance against key measures at the half-year point, coupled with a reasonably strong pipeline, provided assurance that HIE could achieve target out-turns for primary measures by the end of the financial year. However, it was noted that increased focus on interventions that contribute directly to achievement of HIE's four key outcomes was required. Support should also be intensified for time-limited regional transformational opportunities, for place-based development – particularly in inclusive growth focus areas – and progressing HIE's commitment to net zero.

Concerns were expressed that levels of inward investment appeared to concentrate on the Inner Moray Firth and were low in some other areas including Caithness and Sutherland; Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross; Orkney, and Shetland. The Chief Executive confirmed that this issue had been picked up and was being addressed.

In discussion, members stressed the importance of HIE continuing to concentrate effort on population retention and attraction, particularly regarding young people and focus areas. The role of innovation in driving productivity was noted and it was agreed that analysis of productivity trends across sectors would be useful.

The Board also noted that there were limitations inherent in reporting on a single year in isolation, as many projects and programmes require longer timescales to generate benefits fully. In response, it was agreed that future reports will cover a longer timescale to show the impacts of HIE's interventions over several years.

Board members thanked the Head of Planning and Partnerships and the wider team for a comprehensive and clearly presented review that included a great deal of valuable information that should be shared with HIE staff across the organisation. The Board agreed that the ambitious targets set at the start of the year remained appropriate and that no adjustment was required at this stage.

3 Best Value half-year 2024/25 report

The Head of Business Transformation presented the Best Value half-year report for 2024/25, capturing and analysing data against HIE's Best Value plan.

Positive findings were reported against the themes of: reach and engagement; performance; service, and quality. It was highlighted, however that only 25% of HIE clients currently had an approved client plan and that work was required to address this. Another issue that was being examined was the small number of applications (11%) and claims (15%) that were being handled outwith the client portal.

Areas of priority in the second half of the financial year would include cost savings, efficiencies and income; continuing to benchmark with other organisations, and ongoing knowledge sharing to disseminate messages arising from delivery of the Best Value plan.

Discussion focused on the low proportion of HIE clients that had an approved client plan in place. Staff agreed this was an issue and initial investigation had indicated that appropriate engagement was taking place, but there were delays in recording information fully on the HIE system and in agreeing final approval of client plans. Effort would be made in the coming months to complete planning processes that were underway and ensure the information being recorded was a more accurate reflection of HIE activity with clients across the region.

The Board welcomed the half-year report, emphasising the importance of delivering actions arising from the Best Value plan to continue to drive efficiency and effectiveness in HIE.

Chris Roberts
Head of Communications
25 November 2024