

Item: 8

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 7 June 2023.

UHI Branding and Positioning Project.

Report by Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

1. Purpose of Report

To consider adopting the UHI branding and visual identity.

2. Recommendations

The Committee is invited to note:

2.1.

That, in early 2018, a major strategic project was developed and agreed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to refresh the university's brand and visual identity, with the intention that the rebranding project be inclusive of all academic partners in UHI, to deliver a unifying brand story through greater alignment of the partnership's corporate and visual identity.

2.2.

That, on 25 November 2021, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee recommended that the following key elements of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) branding and visual identity design and framework, be supported:

- For the brand, only the acronym UHI used, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' in full dropped.
- 'Orkney College UHI' replaced with the brand name 'UHI Orkney'.
- The strapline 'UHI is where learning means more'.
- A new UHI brand marque.
- A proposed colour palette from which UHI partners could choose.
- A library of stock images to be used across the partnership covering place, subjects and people.

2.3.

That, on 7 December 2021, the Council resolved that the recommendations relating to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project should be referred back to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee to enable the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to further explore the ramifications of the Project, with particular regard to comments made in the consultant's documentation, as presented, and to consider the viability of 'sub-branding'

2.4.

That, on 16 February 2022, the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee established a short life working group, to conclude by the end of 2022, with a remit to consider the Strategic Review, the Options Appraisal and the UHI Branding and Positioning project, together with any other relevant pertaining issues, with a view to informing a draft detailed business review and business plan for Orkney College.

2.5.

That, on 28 March 2022, the new visual identity was adopted and publicly launched by the academic partners of UHI, with the exception of Orkney College UHI and Perth College UHI.

2.6.

That, in January 2023, Perth College UHI subsequently adopted the new visual identity.

2.7.

That the short-life member/officer working group, referred to at paragraph 2.4 above, has given further consideration to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project, and has recommended that all the key elements be adopted by Orkney College UHI.

2.8.

That, should the recommendation at paragraph 2.9 below be approved, Orkney College UHI will work closely with the Communications team, UHI Executive Office, to agree an implementation plan to formally launch the new brand and visual identity before the end of 2023.

It is recommended:

2.9.

That, in line with the other partner colleges in the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), Orkney College UHI adopt the branding and visual identity design and framework, including the following key elements:

- The acronym UHI is used for the visual identity, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' will rarely be used in full.
- The naming strategy in that the brand name 'UHI Orkney' replaces 'Orkney College UHI'.
- The use of the strapline "UHI is where learning means more".
- The new UHI brand marque.
- The colour palette and use of the library of stock images for all digital and printed marketing and promotional material.

3. Previous Council Decisions

Full details of previous Council decisions are attached to this report as Appendix 1.

4. UHI Branding and Positioning Project Background

4.1.

A strategic branding and positioning project was developed and agreed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) in early 2018 to refresh the UHI brand, with the goal of simplifying, unifying and strengthening the brand to improve the understanding of UHI's proposition and key message, and help position the university partnership in a highly competitive local, national and international market.

4.2.

This project was driven by the need to develop a competitive brand position to deliver the university's strategic vision, reflecting the significant changes created regarding UHI governance and partnership arrangements following the Post-16 Scotland Education Act 2013 and, in particular, the new responsibilities UHI assumed since 2014 as regional strategic body for further education and in relationship to its assigned colleges.

4.3.

The project was based on the recognition that the university's approach to 'brand' is complex, given the diversity of its partnership as well as the ongoing debate about its tertiary identity. UHI's 'Strategy 2015-2020' was still uncertain on how best to position the university as a new 'tertiary' entity responsible for both further and higher education. UHI state there was consistent feedback that it was unclear what UHI's distinctive identity and proposition was, given the diverse approach to brand and strategic messaging, resulting in a fragmented approach to student recruitment and marketing.

4.4.

Commencing in 2018, the development of the UHI Branding and Positioning Project concluded in 2021, and on 28 March 2022 the new visual identity was adopted and launched by ten of the twelve academic partners of UHI. Orkney College UHI and Perth College UHI, at that point, did not adopt it.

4.5.

Perth College UHI were initially concerned about dropping the term 'college' from their corporate name and logo. However, further consultation with staff, board members, students and relevant target audiences, resolved this and Perth have subsequently adopted all key elements of the new visual identity, and launched their new image and identity as UHI Perth in January 2023.

5. Proposed New Brand and Visual Identity for Orkney College UHI

5.1.

At a members' seminar on 5 May 2023, UHI presented the new branding and visual identity. Key elements include:

- The acronym UHI is used for the visual identity, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' will rarely be used in full, except to explain the acronym or when describing what UHI do for example both college and university courses are offered.
- The naming strategy for academic partners, of 'UHI' followed by place. For example, UHI Shetland, UHI Argyll, UHI Inverness, etc. In line with this, it is proposed that the brand name 'UHI Orkney' replaces 'Orkney College UHI'. The word 'college' is only dropped in the logos and although referred to as 'UHI Orkney', it can still be referred to as 'the college', including in text, which has worked well for other partners.
- The strapline "UHI is where learning means more".
- The new UHI brand marque, which is the UHI with an embedded plus sign, without any additional wording.
- The colour palette and use of the library of stock images for all digital and printed marketing and promotional material as outlined in brand guidelines.

5.2.

As in all the other academic partners of UHI, these changes would influence all marketing and communication campaigns and materials, including websites, prospectuses, signage and merchandise.

5.3.

Use of both terms 'college' and 'university' would continue to be used, recognising the diverse contexts and audiences in which the brand will be used.

5.4.

If the recommendation of the report is supported, Orkney College UHI would work closely with the Communications team in UHI's Executive Office, to agree an implementation plan to formally launch the new brand and visual identity before the end of 2023.

5.5.

UHI has committed to provide support and finance to cover the cost of signage replacement across the college campus, and towards newly branded merchandise for a launch. They will also continue to support the website, and the design of both digital and printed communications.

6. Island Communities Impact

As the strategy being delivered in terms of this report has been assessed as being unlikely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in Orkney, a full Island Communities Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

7. Links to Council Plan

7.1.

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Council Plan strategic priority of Strengthening our communities: we will widen access to opportunities for better learning, achievement and wellbeing.

7.2.

The proposals in this report relate directly to Priority C3 'Development of learning provision and pathways' of the Council Delivery Plan.

8. Links to Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

The proposals in this report support and contribute to improved outcomes for communities as outlined in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority of Sustainable Development.

9. Financial Implications

9.1.

The financial implications of changing the visual identity of Orkney College UHI includes the cost of changing all signage, merchandising and digital and printed assets. As noted at section 5.5 above, UHI has committed to meet the cost of replacement signage across the campus, and contribute to newly branded merchandise for the launch, as well as support the changes in other materials through design, website changes etc. Therefore, there will be limited financial implications for the College associated with the change in visual identity and brand.

9.2.

Outwith the campus there are road signs directing travellers to Orkney College UHI that will require amending, which will be a cost to the Council/College and need to be met within existing budgets.

10. Legal Aspects

The proposals relate to the branding and visual identity of UHI and its partner institutions, and do not affect the legal status of Orkney College.

11. Contact Officers

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12. Appendix

Appendix 1: Previous Council Decisions

UHI Branding and Positioning Project – Previous Council Decisions

1. Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 25 November 2021

The Committee noted:

1.1. That, in early 2018, a major strategic project was developed and agreed by the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to refresh the university's brand.

1.2. That the rebranding project was inclusive of all academic partners in the UHI, and aimed to deliver a unifying brand story through greater alignment of the partnership corporate and visual identity.

1.3. That, commencing in 2018, the UHI Branding and Positioning Project comprised three main project stages, and was now completing its final development phase with the creation of a new branding and visual identity design and framework.

1.4. That UHI's governing body, the Court, and the UHI Partnership Council, had approved the branding and visual identity design and framework, with the intention to begin implementation for a partnership-wide brand relaunch in early 2022.

1.5. The following key elements contained within the UHI branding and visual identity design and framework:

- For the brand, only the acronym UHI used, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' in full dropped.
- 'Orkney College UHI' replaced with the brand name 'UHI Orkney'.
- The strapline 'UHI is where learning means more'.
- A new UHI brand marque.
- A proposed colour palette from which UHI partners could choose.
- A library of stock images to be used across the partnership covering place, subjects and people.

1.6. That, on 25 October 2021, the College Management Council Sub-committee was advised of the UHI Branding and Positioning Project and the proposed branding and visual identity design and framework.

1.7. The differing views on the proposal to rebrand Orkney College UHI as 'UHI Orkney', as outlined in sections 4.6 and 4.7 of the report by the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee **resolved to recommend:**

1.8. That the following key elements of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) branding and visual identity design and framework, be supported:

- For the brand, only the acronym UHI used, and writing 'University of the Highlands and Islands' in full dropped.
- 'Orkney College UHI' replaced with the brand name 'UHI Orkney'.
- The strapline 'UHI is where learning means more'.
- A new UHI brand marque.
- A proposed colour palette from which UHI partners could choose.
- A library of stock images to be used across the partnership covering place, subjects and people.

2. General Meeting of the Council: 7 December 2021

The Council resolved:

2.1. That the recommendations contained in the Minute of the Special Meeting of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee held on 25 November 2021, be approved, with the following exception:

- The recommendations relating to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project should be referred back to the Committee to enable the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to further explore the ramifications of the Project, with particular regard to comments made in the consultant's documentation, as presented, and to consider the viability of 'sub-branding'.

Orkney College Business Planning Review – Previous Council Decisions

1. Education, Leisure and Housing Committee: 16 February 2022

The Committee noted:

1.1. That, on 20 January 2020, the College Management Council Sub-committee noted the proposal to undertake a strategic review of Orkney College.

1.2. That the strategic review of Orkney College, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, was commissioned in 2020, with the independent consultant, Andrew Thomson, presenting his findings to the College Management Council Sub-committee at an informal briefing on 27 September 2021.

1.3. That, in 2021, seven rural and island partner colleges of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) commissioned an appraisal to explore opportunities for more strategic collaboration, with the consultants, Rockborn Management Consultants, presenting its findings, attached as Appendix 2 to the report by the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing, to the College Management Council Sub-committee at informal briefings on 7 June and 27 September 2021.

1.4. That, also of significance to the business planning of Orkney College, UHI had developed and would shortly be launching a refreshed branding and visual identity design as part of its Branding and Positioning Project.

1.5. That, on 7 December 2021, the Council resolved that the recommendations of the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee relating to the UHI Branding and Positioning Project should be referred back to that Committee, to enable the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing to further explore the ramifications of the Project, with particular regard to comments made in the consultant's documentation, as presented, and to consider the viability of 'sub-branding'.

1.6. The proposal to establish a short life working group, that would conclude by the end of 2022, with a remit to consider the Strategic Review, the Options Appraisal and the UHI Branding and Positioning project, referred to at paragraphs 15.2, 15.3 and 15.4 above respectively, together with any other relevant pertaining issues, with a view to informing a draft detailed business review and business plan for Orkney College.

1.7. That, on 7 February 2022, the College Management Council Sub-committee considered the proposed membership of the short life working group and suggested that membership be expanded to include further representation, including stakeholder input, as appropriate.

The Committee **resolved to recommend:**

1.8. That a short life working group, to conclude by the end of 2022, with a remit to inform a draft detailed business review and business plan for Orkney College, be established.

1.9. That core membership of the short life working group should comprise the following:

- Chair, Education, Leisure and Housing Committee.
- Vice Chair, Education, Leisure and Housing Committee.
- Chair, College Management Council Sub-committee.
- Vice Chair, College Management Council Sub-committee.
- Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing/Head of Education.
- Service Manager (Secondary and Tertiary Education).
- Senior Human Resources Advisor.
- Representatives from Finance, Legal and Committee Services.
- Senior Management Team of Orkney College.
- 2 Community/Business Representatives, College Management Council Sub-committee.
- 1 HISA Representative, College Management Council Sub-committee.
- 1 Staff Representative, College Management Council Sub-committee.

1.10. That stakeholders, as detailed in Appendix 4 to this Minute, should be invited to participate in the work of the short life working group, as and when required.

1.11. That the Executive Director of Education, Leisure and Housing should submit a report, to the Education, Leisure and Housing Committee in early 2023, advising of the outcome of the detailed business review for Orkney College and presenting a business plan.