

Highland Community Planning Board

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Community Planning Board held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Friday, 5 December 2014, at 10.00 a.m.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mr D Hendry (in the Chair)
Dr D Alston
Mrs C Wilson
Mr S Barron
Ms M Morris
Mr B Alexander
Mr S Black
Ms C McDiarmid

Highlands and Islands Enterprise:

Mr M Johnson

Highland Third Sector Interface

Ms M Wylie

NHS Highland:

Mr G Coutts
Mr K Oliver

Police Scotland

Supt A Macpherson

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

Mr S Hay

Scottish Government

Mr J Pryce

Scottish Natural Heritage:

Mr G Hogg

Scottish Police Authority

Mr I Ross

University of the Highlands and Islands:

Prof C Mulholland

Also Present:

Mr A Standing, Head of Operations - North Region, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) (item 3)
Mr J Clark, Director of Service Design and Innovation, SDS (item 3)
Mr M Biagi MSP, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment (Item 5)
Mr H Buchanan, Relationship Manager, Local Government Division, The Scottish Government (item 5)

In Attendance:

Mrs R Moir, Principal Committee Administrator, the Highland Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Gray, Mr W Gilfillan and Mr D Yule (all Highland Council); Ms C Wright (Highlands and Islands Enterprise); Mr J Wilson (Highland Third Sector Interface); Ms E Mead, Mrs J Baird and Ms C Steer (NHS Highland); Chief Supt J Innes (Police Scotland); Ms F Larg (University of the Highlands and Islands); and Mr S Finlayson (Youth Convener).

2. Minutes of Meeting

i. Community Planning Board

There had been circulated and were **APPROVED** Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 13 October 2014.

ii. Community Planning Partnership Chief Officers Group

There had been circulated and was **NOTED** draft Note of the Meeting held on 7 November 2014.

3. Skills Development Scotland

Mr A Standing, Head of Operations - North Region, Skills Development Scotland (SDS), gave a presentation on current SDS work in the region and its contribution to meeting the Partnership's Single Outcome Agreement aims.

In the course of his presentation / subsequent remarks, Mr Standing outlined:

- how SDS was organised so as to work with:
 - individuals, in stimulating the supply side
 - employers and business, in establishing demand for skills now and in the future
 - partners, in supplying appropriate skills to drive the Highland economy
- a range of examples under each category evidencing SDS's contribution to improving skills and employability, including:
 - investment in Modern Apprenticeships
 - Employability Fund provision
 - Career Management Skills Engagements
 - My World of Work registrations
 - partner training, including development of Guides for teachers
 - careers conventions/events
 - head teacher consultation/surveys
 - post-redundancy support through Partnership Action for Continuing Employment (PACE)
 - Learning through Work Week
 - engagement with individual businesses, e.g. Hydrasun, Aviemore; MacGregor Industrial Supplies; Cap Gemini
 - Highlands and Islands' Regional Skills Investment Plan
 - partnership working/joint planning – e.g. Highland Council / Department of Work and Pensions / Job Centre Plus / University of the Highlands and Islands
- 5 agreed key themes:
 - investing in skills to meet the needs of employers and businesses
 - planning for the needs of the future economy
 - retaining young people in the region
 - attracting young families / working age people to the region
 - engaging employers in the skills system
- the imminent publication of the outcome of a survey of school-leavers on employment destinations, on which further detail could be brought to a future meeting

In discussion, concerns raised included:

- the impression that Highland had a low skills/low wage economy relative to the rest of the UK and the need for robust information to evidence the reality or otherwise of this perception and address it as necessary
- the merits of a zero poverty target for Highland
- whilst acknowledging the importance of sectors such as oil and gas as economic drivers, the importance of recognising also the need to develop essential sectors such as health and social care
- the need to balance employment/training/benefits factors so as to facilitate upskilling efforts
- the arguments for developing tailored and effective local strategies and action plans at a sub-Highland level, particularly with a view to taking forward implementation of the recommendations of the Wood Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce.

After discussion, the Board **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a report be brought to a future Board meeting with a view to further discussion on the issues raised of relevance to SOA themes, in particular the need to tackle poverty.

4. Delivering Partnership Outcomes

The following circulated updates were provided by Responsible Officers on progress against the current delivery plans for the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and on developing partnership working.

a. Economic Growth and Regeneration

The circulated update on 2014/15 activity by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) as lead partner on this theme offered an assessment that business confidence continued to improve, with significant demand on services to support growth, recognising, however, that the global economy remained challenging, and that the downturn in oil prices was indicative of weak global demand and future growth prospects in general. The update provided a range of quantitative data and outlined some of the progress in Partnership work.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

b. Employability

The circulated report by the Highland Council as lead partner on this theme presented an overview of progress in achieving the Employment outcomes identified in the Single Outcome Agreement. It provided figures in relation to Jobseekers Allowance and also Employment and Support Allowance / Incapacity Benefit claimants, concluding that, increasingly, the client group seeking support comprised those individuals who were furthest removed from the labour market. The report outlined a range of initiatives/opportunities that would enable/drive forward partnership activity, with particular reference to the new EU Structural Fund Programme 2014-2020, The Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan and the Wood Commission recommendations, together with the Youth Employment Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) completed by the Council, and its resultant action plan. These various issues would inform a revised Single Outcome Agreement Action Plan 2015.

The Director of Development and Infrastructure highlighted the long-standing relative preponderance within the Highland economy of smaller firms/employers and/or low wage sector employment. In discussion, the importance of developing a more mixed economy was acknowledged, for example through developing higher-tech/higher value employment opportunities.

The Board **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that a seminar be held in 2015 to examine further how to tackle the issue of a low pay economy.

c. Early years/Children

The circulated report by the Highland Council as lead partner on this theme reminded Board members that the earliest years of a child's life represented the single greatest chance to make a lasting impact on their future, and outlined progress on the "Model for Improvement" approach adopted under the Early Years Collaborative (EYC) in relation to Council and NHS Highland structures. The report referenced the EYC "stretch aims", various staff development initiatives and examples of EYC improvement activities, and provided an update on a range of performance measures.

The Director of Care and Learning commented that evidence to date indicated that recent Welfare Reform changes were creating significant problems and impacting negatively on individuals, some of whom had experienced difficulty in accessing benefits at all. There was also concern as to the likely impact, on vulnerable people in particular, of the pending introduction of Personal Independence Payments.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

d. Safer and stronger communities

The circulated report by Police Scotland as lead partner on this theme provided a progress update on the Safer Highland Group, in particular action taken with a view to raising the group's media profile, together with a summary of Police Scotland crime statistics for the Highland Council area for the period April to October 2014.

In discussion, emphasis was placed on the contribution made by the community planning Partnership as a whole towards the significant decrease in crime figures. It was also commented that Highland's image as a safe and thus desirable area should be promoted as a marketing tool for attracting investment. The Board was also advised that the Highland area had received the highest number of officer transfer-in requests of any Division within Police Scotland.

The Board **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that examples of the progress achieved in partnership working in Highland should be communicated to the National Community Planning Group as models of good practice.

e. Health inequalities and physical activity

The circulated update and report by NHS Highland as lead partner on this theme outlined progress in the work of the health inequalities theme group and provided updates on: Highland Council preventative spend, with particular reference to the work of the four community health coordinators and the three Community Food and Health Practitioners; housing and homelessness activity; fuel poverty; welfare reform; and physical activity. The report highlighted emerging themes for further action as being rural poverty and fragile areas, and also self-assessment.

In commenting on the welfare reform section of the report, the Head of Policy and Reform drew attention to the recent Council decision to allocate more than £160,000 of additional funding from its Welfare Fund to provide tailored welfare and money advice to those suffering from mental ill-health.

The Board **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that the issue of Welfare Reform and its impact (item 4(c) above also refers) be discussed at a future meeting.

f. Outcomes for older people

The circulated report by NHS Highland as lead partner on this theme outlined recent activity by the Adult Services Commissioning Group and the Older Peoples Improvement Group and advised that all performance indicators had been reviewed to allow focus on evidencing improvements in relation to a number of priorities as set out in the report.

In this context, the report provided brief updates in relation to Telecare redesign, in the context of wider assistive technology and Living it Up; establishment of single point of access to care; the Change and Improvement Plan; a pending integrated inspection of older people's services to be conducted by Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Care Inspectorate; and ongoing work to support improvements in quality in care homes.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

g. Environmental outcomes

The circulated report by SNH as lead partner on this theme outlined a number of recent highlights, including the Carbon Clever Conference on 17 November 2014; a recent Scottish Government workshop in Inverness on the review of the Scottish Land Use Strategy; wildlife crime concerns, with particular reference to recent destruction of pearl mussel beds; SNH identification of important Wildcat habitation areas; the launch of the public consultation on the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan; ongoing work on a proposed European structural funds project, "Space by the Water", in and around the South Kessock and Merkinch areas of Inverness; and a Nature and Wellbeing seminar held in Inverness on 2 December 2014 by Dunain Community Woodland and the Scottish Waterways Trust.

The report concluded that significant work was underway within Highland relevant to the Environmental theme, some of which could now be specifically attributed to community planning and the Single Outcome Agreement, with the

rest at least influenced by the community planning agenda. It was important to build on this to make community planning real and meaningful for communities across Highland.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

h. Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) Development Plan

The circulated report by the Highland Council provided information on progress on the six areas for improvement identified by the Quality Assurance process for the Highland SOA 2013-18. The report had been circulated to Audit Scotland as they had requested information on progress being made, as part of their process for identifying where additional scrutiny might be needed.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

i. Community Learning and Development

At its meeting held on 5 June 2014, the Board had agreed to form a Community Learning and Development Strategic Partnership, comprising senior officers from each of the agencies and chaired by the Director of Care and Learning, as responsible officer for the statutory duty falling on the Highland Council as Education Authority under The Requirements of Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 1913.

The circulated report by the Highland Council outlined progress since that time in identifying the various participating individuals and summarised: the issues discussed at the group's initial meeting; the agenda set for further discussion; and ongoing activity, including discussions commenced with District Partnerships. The report also drew attention to a range of current Community Planning Partnership support for community capacity building.

In commenting on the report, the Director drew attention to the difficulty of scheduling meetings that required bringing together so many senior officers. A further meeting of the group was scheduled for January 2015. In discussion, the importance of making communities aware of the new structures and the key points of contact was emphasised.

The Board **NOTED** the position and that updated guidance for District Partnerships would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

5. Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Membership

There had been circulated Report dated 16 November 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform, the Highland Council, seeking Board approval for a process to expand the membership of the CPP and making recommendations for three out of five membership requests received.

In discussion, it was suggested that, pending the outcome of further discussions with Bòrd na Gàidhlig on how best to locate the Gaelic language within the CPP structure, it would be useful for the Partnership, in the interim, to issue a statement confirming that all partners were committed to supporting Gaelic and

were working together on the Gaelic Plan and the issues surrounding the language.

After discussion, the Board **APPROVED** the use of the framework for extending CPP membership, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the addition of specific reference to contribution to the Partnership's zero poverty and zero carbon targets; and **AGREED** that:

- i. High Life Highland be invited to participate at the Chief Officers Group (COG) and Board, with invitations extended to the Chief Executive and Chair (with substitutes allowed when not available), and that the Highland Culture Strategic Board be formally adopted within the CPP structure; and
- ii. a public statement be issued confirming that all partners were working together on the Gaelic Plan and on Gaelic issues.

The Board also **NOTED** that:

- i. the membership interest of the Department for Works and Pensions was satisfied through its recent discussion with the COG and the on-going membership of two theme groups;
- ii. further recommendations would be made on the membership options for Bòrd na Gàidhlig, which in the meantime would make progress with partners to identify how to make the most of Gaelic as an asset for the CPP, how to improve effectiveness and efficiency of Gaelic language planning and how best to locate it within the CPP structure;
- iii. Gaelic awareness-raising would be included in the Board's next meeting; and
- iv. further contact would be made with Skills Development Scotland and the Cairngorms National Park Authority to discuss potentially extending their membership of the CPP, with recommendations to a future Board meeting.

6. Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill

There had been circulated Report dated 26 November 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform, the Highland Council, inviting the Board to discuss the opportunities and implications for the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) arising from the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill currently before the Scottish Parliament. The report outlined the background to the Bill and summarised those provisions affecting the Partnership, together with their implications.

Mr Marco Biagi MSP, Minister for Local Government and Community Empowerment, addressed the Board on the Scottish Government rationale for introducing the Bill, which recognised the desire of many communities for more proactive participation in the decisions affecting their lives. Established consultation methods were not considered successful in reaching all sectors of the community. The legislation itself would be a first step; what was ultimately envisaged was a culture shift to a more "bottom-up" participatory approach that would include voices not currently being heard. The value of shared decision-making in a time of budget constraint was also recognised.

In discussion, attention was drawn to the comment in the Council's submission on the Bill that giving Community Councils the status of corporate bodies would

significantly assist the realisation of the Bill's aims, for example on asset transfer and ownership. Reference was also made to the existing model of the National Forest Land Scheme.

Recognition was given to the tendency in many communities for the same individuals to be active across a range of community bodies; whilst this commitment was valued, and many existing community councils/other community bodies were highly successful, it would be important to motivate and involve new, additional voices, in particular those of young people. The risk of volunteer fatigue also needed to be addressed. Attention was drawn to information available on techniques used elsewhere for widening public participation and representation at community level, such as participatory budgeting and mini-publics.

Better dissemination of information would be required, with means identified to tap into the increased levels of enthusiasm and energy exhibited across Scotland in recent months. Existing power structures would need to learn to cede/share control of information and resources. There should also be greater tolerance of the possibility that not all projects/experiments would be successful; innovation and flexibility should be encouraged and a culture of forgiveness fostered. Allowing for flexibility would also require acceptance that service delivery might no longer be universal, with local variations according to local community circumstances and choices.

In commenting on the points raised, the Minister, while sharing the sentiment that greater tolerance of failed initiatives would be desirable, highlighted the need to build in mechanisms to protect capital assets otherwise potentially at risk. He underscored the importance of managing expectations and of offering communities a range of participation/engagement opportunities/layers; for example, not everyone who wanted to participate/contribute wanted to sit on a governance body. He also confirmed that thought would be given to developing the role and structure of community councils, whilst pointing out that the Bill covered not only community councils, but community bodies more widely.

After discussion, the Board **NOTED**:

- i. the provisions of the Bill, the stage it was at in the Parliamentary process, and that enactment was expected in summer 2015;
- ii. that some provisions affected some partners more than others – for example there was likely to be a greater call on HIE and Council resources to support the extension of the community right to buy – but that all partners would have an interest in all parts of the Bill, given the connections between them and the outcomes in the Highland Single Outcome Agreement;
- iii. that further reports on the Bill and the CPP response to it could be prepared for the Board; and
- iv. that a report on community engagement through participatory budgeting would be brought to a future meeting of the Board.

The Board also **AGREED**:

- i. that the CPP work in partnership by sharing staff time and resources to be ready for implementation in the areas of: facilitating community planning

- (including rotating the chair for Board meetings, while still permitting an appropriate level of continuity); and designing the process for participation requests and asset transfer requests;
- ii. the need for the CPP to ensure that communities currently disempowered, or least ready to participate in new rights to be afforded to them, were supported to participate and have more power and influence over what mattered to them;
 - iii. that information be brought to the Board on participatory approaches, including mini-publics, for improving participation by people not normally involved in local decision-making; and
 - iv. that consideration be given at a future meeting to building on existing structures and using existing partner community events to disseminate information on the Community Empowerment legislation and its opportunities.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 4 March 2015, in the Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness.

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.