

The Highland Council

Highland Public Services Partnership Performance Board

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Public Services Partnership Performance Board held in the Council Chamber, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Friday, 13 September 2013 at 10.00am.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mr D Hendry (in the Chair)
Dr D Alston
Mr J Gray
Mr S Barron

Mr B Alexander
Ms C McDiarmid
Ms E Johnston

Highlands and Islands Enterprise:

Mr M Johnson

Scottish Natural Heritage:

Mr B Leyshon

Scottish Police Authority

Mr I Ross

The Scottish Government:

Mr J Pryce

Police Scotland:

Mr J Innes

NHS Highland:

Mr G Coutts
Ms M Paton
Ms C Steer
Mr S Steer

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

Mr S Hay
Dr M Foxley

UHI:

Mr J Fraser
Mr M Wright

Highland Third Sector Interface:

Ms M Wylie

Other Representatives (item 5 only):

Mr M Hendrikson, Care Inspectorate
Ms L Connolly, Care Inspectorate

In Attendance:

Mrs R Moir, Principal Committee Administrator, Highland Council

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms C Wright, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Mr G Hogg, Scottish Natural Heritage, Ms E Mead, NHS Highland, Mr G Sutherland, Highland Third Sector Interface, and Mr J Fraser, University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI).

2. Minutes of Meeting

There had been circulated Minutes of the previous Meeting held on 6 June 2013.

An assurance was sought that any agreement of minutes would not inhibit continued discussion of the issues in question, in light of the ongoing development of the Partnership.

An assurance having been so given, the Board **APPROVED** the Minutes, subject to this caveat.

3. Single Outcome Agreement Development

There had been circulated Report dated 4 September 2013 by the Head of Policy and Performance, Highland Council, confirming the process for finalising the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), including the quality assurance process carried out, the development actions now required, and the “sign-off” letter received from the Minister for Local Government and Planning.

There were also tabled copies of a letter just received from the National Community Planning Group, together with copies of the “Agreement on Joint Working on Community Planning and Resourcing” published alongside the 2014-15 Scottish Government Budget.

During a summary of the report, attention was drawn to the generally positive and constructive feedback received from the Quality Assurance panel and also to the improvement areas identified. The quality assurance process had acknowledged some strengths that the partnership itself had not previously recognised, and thought was being given as to how the positivity of the Peer Review approach could be built on further. The possibility of an ongoing relationship with the Quality Assurance panel as a “critical friend” was also being explored.

The Board was further advised that civil servants were examining what common themes had emerged from the 32 separate quality assurance processes across Scotland and this was expected to lead to further discussion.

Attention was drawn to a reference in a circulated letter from the Quality Assurance team to “an initial £3m prevention fund (provided by the Council) ... put in place to support the CPP’s burgeoning partnership plan”. It was clarified that this should have referred to a revenue transfer of £3m per annum over a two-year period, and not to a fund in the sense of a pot of money.

During discussion, emphasis was placed on the importance of organisational leads identifying and addressing any inhibitors/blockages to partnership working identified within their own organisations. While discussions and cooperation at the level of this Board were proving effective, albeit at times robust, it was important that the message of collaboration was clearly communicated to operational teams.

Thereafter, the Board **NOTED** the positive feedback from the Quality Assurance panel and that the SOA had been agreed by the Scottish Government, with

Community Planning Partnerships likely to be asked for views on the Quality Assurance process; and **AGREED** that a further report on progress on the draft development actions, as appended to the report, be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

4. Community Planning Structure Review – Update

There had been circulated Report dated 4 September 2013 by the Head of Policy and Performance, Highland Council, providing an update on the proposals so far for reviewing community planning arrangements by theme and seeking consideration as to whether any changes were required to the community planning structure being designed.

a) Remit and Membership of the Highland Public Partnership Performance Board, Chief Officer Group and Theme/Policy Groups

The report highlighted the Board's previous decisions on revising its organisational structure, membership and group remits. It had been agreed that the Board would comprise members from partner Boards and elected Members from the Council; that Board meetings would involve Chief Officers from partner organisations, who would also meet as a Chief Officer Group; and that theme/policy groups would be established.

The report set out those Board members identified to date by partner organisations, recognising that in some cases individuals had been nominated by more than one organisation and accordingly had more than one role. It also acknowledged that, in some partner organisations, the chief officer was also a formal board member of that particular organisation.

During discussion, it was clarified that the new UHI Board had still to meet and take its decision as to who its representative would be. It had to be borne in mind, however, that many UHI Board members were volunteers who might find it difficult to give the necessary time commitment. It was also acknowledged that representation from HIE had still to be confirmed and was subject to ongoing consideration. Appointing an independent Board member could again involve logistical difficulties, particularly as HIE had to cover more than one Community Planning Partnership. It was recognised that, in some cases, organisations might be represented on the Partnership Board by the chief executive or other senior officer on the board of the particular organisation.

In addition to Mr I Ross having a dual role in formally representing both the Scottish Police Authority and Scottish Natural Heritage, Dr M Foxley highlighted his own interests in the Further Education sector in addition to his formal representation of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, and indicated his hope that he could offer useful input in relation to the former sector also.

During further discussion, it was suggested that it was primarily for each organisation to make its choice as to who would best represent its interests on the Partnership Board and each should be invited to do so, recognising that this might result in some Board members wearing more than one hat, as was already the case. This could, however, have benefits as well as potential conflicts and the impact could be monitored over time and revisited if thought necessary.

A suggestion from the Chair that, in the interest of further widening the Board's representative role, the Highland Youth Convener be invited to join the Board received general support.

On the issue of governance, there was general agreement that responsibility for this lay solely with the appointed Board. While the Chief Officer Group was responsible for driving forward partnership working and ensuring its delivery, and was accountable to the Board for this, it did not have a governance role – albeit it was acknowledged that some individual chief officers might also be Board members as a result of appointment to that position by their own organisation.

In relation to the respective roles and remits of the Chief Officer Group and the Theme/Policy Groups, it was emphasised that the priority was to ensure that the work tasked to these thematic groups was carried out. It was also recognised that Chief Officers had a responsibility to manage their staff members working within such groups. The view was, however, expressed that thematic group leads should attend Board meetings in order to report direct to Board Members – in addition to reporting to the Chief Officer Group – rather than have their views filtered at Board meetings through attendance and reporting by Chief Officers only.

b) Proposed working arrangements by theme/policy area

There had been circulated together with the main report update briefings by the relevant lead officers on progress in relation to a number of themed areas. There was also tabled a schematic representation of the working arrangements proposed in relation to Safer Highland. Discussion on the themes of Property/Shared Services and on Europe was deferred until the Board's December meeting.

i. Safer Highland

In speaking to the tabled diagram, Chief Superintendent J Innes summarised the work carried out to date in relation to consultation, mapping of the pre-existing landscape of some 179 relevant partner organisations, and research into existing guidance such as that provided by the Safer Communities Programme. The tabled schema offered a structural overview reflecting linkages between core existing organisations, with the Partnership Board, and below it the Chief Officer Group, at its apex. It was suggested that the next layer comprise a Public Protection Strategy Group and the Safer Highland Group, with a range of Highland-wide umbrella groups feeding into these, such as the Violence Against Women Group and the Anti-Social Behaviour Group. Other interests were also acknowledged within the diagram; while underpinning the entire structure at a grass roots level were the various community improvement groups, such as Safer Lochaber.

CS Innes emphasised that his core message was to highlight the considerable amount of good and valuable work already going on in a range of groups which were not all necessarily recognised as being a part of community safety activity. Whilst it was important to confirm the value of existing community effort, and not to appear to impose on communities from above, there could be value in

improving public understanding and confidence in the effectiveness of both existing and proposed policies and actions through streamlining of the landscape and terminology used, for example through wider use of the label “Safer ...”. He also drew attention to the need to clarify how the SOA and the statutorily-required Local Policing and Fire and Rescue Plans could best be integrated.

During discussion, the model outlined was welcomed as an effective basis for further discussion and consultation. It was important to recognise the integral importance of the theme and its related activity to wider community interests, and not to treat it in isolation from other policies and strategies, but to build on commonality while respecting the role of other specialisms. Active locality groups were essential, albeit that some rationalisation might be desirable. One area for further examination would be the relationship with, and role of, District Partnerships.

ii. Environment

The circulated briefing on the Environment theme, authored and led by Scottish Natural Heritage, drew attention to the existing work of the Highland Biodiversity Partnership and the Highland Environment Forum and recommended that, given the degree of overlap already evident, in future these be merged into a new Highland Environment Forum. Led by Mr George Hogg, this would act as the strategic theme group under the SOA and would also respond to environmental agendas emerging from the grass roots level. Some 50 individuals/organisations, representing a broad range of stakeholders, had been invited to attend an inaugural meeting of the revised Forum, to be held on 24 September 2013.

It was proposed that the new Forum meet twice a year, with most of its work delivered through sub-groups of its membership. It was envisaged that it would act as a force for better integration of activity on environmental matters within Highland, and also as a key communication channel between the broad range of stakeholders and the Community Planning Partnership.

During discussion, the opportunity for participation in the Forum by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service was welcomed, particularly given the shared interest in wildfire risk. It was also pointed out that the Forum’s activities could be drawn to wider public attention through the continued reporting of Forum Minutes to the Council’s Planning, Environment and Development Committee.

iii. Economic Recovery and Growth

The circulated briefing on the Economic Recovery and Growth theme, authored and led by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, set out the main structures required to deliver the Economic Growth and Regeneration strand of the Highland SOA in relation to the four main long-term objectives of: Creating Successful Places, Skills and Employability, Support for Business, and Infrastructure. These long-term objectives had in turn a number of intermediate/short-term objectives, and the paper set out a diagrammatic representation of the structural arrangements proposed for the delivery of each objective, involving in each case a lead partner to coordinate activity, who would

also be responsible for ensuring the recording and reporting of the relevant planning, activity, progress and eventual outcome.

The briefing proposed that the current Highland Economic Forum have regional oversight of the Economic Growth and Regeneration strand of the SOA, and meet four times per year, ahead of the meetings of this Board. A pragmatic approach to engagement at a local sub-regional level was also proposed, utilising existing current structures/forums where possible, on an ad hoc basis, such as Ward Forums and Community Councils. The briefing further suggested that, where it would be more appropriate to review and engage on a wider geographic basis, there be a role for the current Area Committees, and that once per annum each Area Committee have a specifically themed meeting on Economic Growth and Regeneration, with invitations extended to representatives from communities, organisations and agencies.

During discussion, it was suggested that further consideration be given to whether it would be more appropriate to develop a new group to take this theme forward in relation to Inverness, particularly given the impact of other factors such as the Seven Cities Strategy. Whilst it would be important to avoid duplication, this merited being looked at further. In this context, attention was drawn to the potential for widening participation in the Council senior officer group currently overseeing activity in this field, such as the major projects happening and proposed around Inverness, for which governance was already in place through reports submitted to the City of Inverness and Area Committee. A request was also made for appropriate involvement of the Third Sector.

It was also suggested that the group proposed for Skills and Employability could be that put forward under the theme of Employment (item 4(b)(iv) below refers), rather than having a separate group for this purpose under the Economic Recovery and Growth theme.

iv. Employment

The circulated briefing on the Employment theme, authored by the Highland Council's Planning and Development Service, set out a diagrammatic representation of the structural arrangements proposed, comment being made that this was broadly similar in structure and concept to the diagram tabled in relation to the earlier community safety theme, with Partnership governance at the apex, local activity at the base, and linking layers in between. In the case of the Employment theme, the schema had at its core the Highland Works for Employment Strategic Partnership, and sketched the links between that body and a number of other themes, groups and Council Committees, together with the underpinning layers of more local activity. Attention was drawn to the inclusion of a wider range of agencies than those making up the community planning partnership, including the Department for Work and Pensions and Skills Development Scotland.

The briefing also outlined a number of projects and activities already in place, such as the Create and Employ project aimed at small businesses, successes achieved in reducing youth unemployment, and work undertaken together with the Third Sector. Reporting mechanisms were in place via the Council's

Planning, Environment & Development and Adult & Children's Services Committees, in addition to the Area Committees.

During discussion, attention was drawn to the importance of partner organisations reviewing their own recruitment strategies, particularly the impact these could have on tackling inequalities and improving employment opportunities in deprived communities. This was an area of particular challenge, including in terms of gathering and collating meaningful data to inform policy development. It was, however, an area where the potential benefits overlapped SOA themes, with, for example, improving employability for young people contributing to reducing youth offending and anti-social behaviour.

v. Early Years/Children

The circulated briefing on the Early Years/Children theme, authored and led by the Highland Council's Health and Social Care Service, drew attention to the requirement for local partnerships to have an integrated Children's Services Plan, including the impact of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Bill, which would further require annual reporting on the achievement of outcomes. It also highlighted ongoing work on "For Highlands Children - Volume 4" (FHC4), the proposed Children's Service Plan for the Health & Social Care and Education, Culture & Sport Services within Highland Council, which would also incorporate, as far as possible, the contribution of children's services delivered by NHS Highland.

The briefing, as with those already considered, set out a diagrammatic representation of the planning and operational structure designed to support FHC4, with again the Partnership Board and Chief Officer Group at its apex, and thereafter a broadly-based multi-agency and multi-sectoral Leadership Group, which included lead officers from Highland Council, NHS Highland, the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration and Northern Constabulary, staff representatives from NHS Highland and Highland Council, third sector partners, and elected members, including the Children's Champion. The diagram further illustrated links from the Leadership Group to a number of other bodies, including a range of improvement groups leading on specific areas of service delivery; links from these improvement groups to various other organisations, including District Partnerships, in relation to which further proposals were planned; and, again, an underpinning of more local consultative and representative organisations.

The briefing also included a further diagram on the specific structures relating to the Highland Early Years Collaborative. Attention was drawn to the significant overlap in membership between the Collaborative's Executive and the Chief Officer Group and the suggestion made that consideration be given to merging these functions, and for the Chief Officer Group to take on the role of Executive of the Early Years Collaborative.

In response to a request from CS Innes, it was confirmed that the Council could produce a diagram showing the relationships between Ward Forums, District Partnerships and Council Committees, to assist CS Innes in restructuring the local Police command structure, in order to optimise tie-in.

vi. Older People

The circulated briefing on the Older People theme, authored by NHS Highland, drew attention to the Integrated Services Partnership agreement with Highland Council whereby NHS Highland had become the Lead Agency for Adult services. While the agreed performance framework and governance structure across the Health Board and Council had been used as the basis for the draft SOA chapter and expanded to reflect the interests and contributions of the Community Planning Partnership, the briefing paper indicated that it had always been recognised that, to improve on the delivery of outcomes for older people, wider partnership working, e.g. through evolving Improvement groups, would be required across other public sector partners as well as the independent and third sectors. Accordingly, partners were invited to join these Improvement groups, for which a generic role and remit had been appended to the briefing paper.

The briefing also drew attention to:

- the importance of the relationship with Strategic Commissioning
- the development of an initial five-year plan
- the various specific strands of work being taken forward
- the role and development of District Partnerships involving Councillors, relevant managers, community representatives and representatives of professional groups
- recurring themes emerging from the District Partnerships
- the need for District Partnerships to become more pro-active to support future planning and commissioning.

During presentation of the briefing paper, attention was drawn to the statutory framework applying to service delivery under this theme, together with the terms of the Partnership agreement with Highland Council, including the governance arrangements set out therein, which distinguished the role of NHS Highland in this context within Scotland and raised the question as to what scope remained for wider partnership scrutiny of this area.

During discussion, while recognising the unique scenario in Highland, it was suggested that a range of partnership themes could be identified as being of relevance to older people – as was the case with integrated children's services – and that the valuable contribution the wider partnership could thus make merited recognition alongside the other benefits arising from community planning. Clarity was sought as to how linkages to both the Partnership and the Council's Adult and Children's Services Committee might be added to the core diagrammatic representation appended to the briefing paper, so as to recognise this wider governance and support a coordinated approach across Partnership activity. Further work/self-audit would be undertaken to examine this area in greater depth, with a view to identifying the scope for an appropriate level of partnership scrutiny.

vii. Update on Equalities

The circulated briefing on the Equalities theme, authored by NHS Highland, drew attention to the recent establishment of a specific partnership sub-group to address inequalities in health, and to the cross-cutting nature of this theme. The

briefing drew specific attention to a number of recent developments/activities, including:

- a conference held in April 2013
- specific resources allocated to community development by both the Highland Council and NHS Highland
- a Health Scotland half day workshop held in August 2013
- a framework for considering current activity on inequalities introduced as an outcome from this workshop

The briefing further advised that mapping of local work, resources and partnerships was in progress, and would be a key first task for the proposed local community development teams, once in post. In its early meetings, the Reducing Health Inequalities Group would discuss the findings from the mapping exercise; invite presentations and discussion from identified existing groups, such as Welfare Reform, Employability, and Health and Homelessness; establish the reporting arrangements for the community development resource; and develop its framework for targeting effective action to reduce inequalities. The Group would provide the Board with progress reports.

The Group's role and remit was still in development and the relevant links had not yet been fully established. Discussions were planned with District Partnerships, while invitations would be extended to a number of organisations not yet represented to attend the Group's next meeting in October.

During discussion, attention was drawn to the significant impact of rural deprivation on health inequalities, given the comparative costs of maintaining a positive lifestyle in rural as compared to urban areas. It was suggested that UHI be represented on the Inequalities Group, given the significant contribution of the Further Education sector to improving life opportunities and thus health. In this context, it was also suggested that the Partnership would benefit in its discussions from developing a shared understanding of the definition of rural deprivation. Attention was also drawn to the growing recognition of the health and wellbeing benefits to be gained from the environment and green spaces, and the real opportunities this could offer in a Highland context.

viii. Community Learning and Development

The circulated briefing on the Community Learning and Development theme, authored by NHS Highland, highlighted the Community Development working group's status as a task group, rather than a themed group identified as a vehicle for delivery and accountability of a particular chapter of the SOA. Rather, it had an enabling role, with a remit to promote and support better alignment and increased efficiency and effectiveness in community development/community capacity building activity and support. The briefing expanded on this remit, and outlined proposals for revised local structural arrangements designed to improve local communications and develop collaborative working.

The briefing pointed out that, as a task group, the Community Development group did not constitute a Community Learning & Development (CLD) Partnership as described in the Strategic Guidance. Given there were new statutory duties for CLD, it was proposed that Education Scotland be invited to

attend this Board's meeting in December 2013, and also that the Community Planning Partnership host an event in February 2014, to bring together community development and community learning practitioners and activists with a view to considering how to form a formal CLD Partnership, as part of the Community Planning Partnership, that would also take on board the new statutory duties.

During presentation of the briefing paper, the need to share a common language during partnership discussion was again emphasised, in particular the value of agreeing a shared definition of community development.

c) Next Steps

The circulated report also drew attention to specific opportunities arising from the review of partnership arrangements in relation to further self-evaluation and sharing approaches to gauging public opinion.

Proposals on taking forward self-evaluation, which had been identified as an action for the Partnership, would be brought to a future meeting. These would draw on previous work done and would help to prepare for further external scrutiny through inspection and audits, including a new style of community planning inspection.

In relation to gauging public opinion, an important element of community consultation, particular attention was drawn to the role and effectiveness of the Council's Citizens' Panel, established in 2010 and comprising 2,350 randomly selected adults who had each agreed to take part in up to 3 surveys per year. Partner organisations were invited to consider whether they might also wish to seek to engage with the Panel, for their interests, provided the Panel members were in turn content that this be done. Additional costs involved would require to be borne by the relevant additional participating organisations.

Following discussion on all of the above issues, the Board **NOTED**:

- i. that the Partnership's approach to reviewing its governance and accountability arrangements was regarded as a strength by the Quality Assurance panel;
- ii. that a report would be brought back to a Board meeting with proposals on a systematic approach to self-evaluation for the Partnership; and
- iii. the early proposals from Lead Officers on getting partnership arrangements fit for the themed groups purposes.

The Board also **AGREED**:-

- i. to invite each partner organisation to re-confirm its nomination of its Board representative, taking into account the issues raised during discussion;
- ii. to invite the Highland Youth Convener to join the Board;
- iii. that no changes were currently required to the Chief Officer Group's purpose of driving public sector reform, as set out in the report, subject to recognition that its role did not include governance;

- iv. that consideration be given to establishing a new body to coordinate and take forward delivery of the Economic Recovery and Growth theme in relation to Inverness;
- v. that consideration be given to the Chief Officer Group taking over the role of Executive of the Early Years Collaborative;
- vi. that a diagram be prepared and circulated showing the relationships between Ward Forums, District Partnerships and Council Committees;
- vii. that further work be undertaken to examine the wider partnership's role in relation to the delivery of the Older People theme;
- viii. that the Partnership seek to develop shared definitions of concepts such as rural deprivation and community development;
- ix. that the Board continue to meet four times per year;
- x. that thematic leads also attend Board meetings, to report direct to Board Members; and
- xi. that it be open to partners to make use of the Council's Citizens' Panel, with appropriate resource contributions, should they determine that they wished to do so and should Panel members be in agreement.

5. Presentation – Children's Services Inspection

There had been circulated Joint Report dated 3 September 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care and Director of Education, Culture and Sport, Highland Council, providing notice to the Partnership of a joint inspection of children's services in Highland, due to take place in October/November 2013. The inspection would examine how well public services worked together to improve outcomes for children, especially children in need.

The Board welcomed Mr Marc Hendrikson, Senior Inspector, and Ms Linda Connolly, Depute Inspector, who undertook a short presentation on the Inspection scope and process.

During the presentation, Ms Connolly explained their approach to the inspection process and the principles for the new scrutiny model, and summarised their achievements to date, including experience drawn from a number of pilot inspections. The current Highland inspection would be the first full inspection under the new model.

Mr Hendrikson set out the key features of and schedule for the inspection process, which had a framework of 6 high-level questions and 22 quality indicators based on EFQM and would be spread over a 22 week footprint. Nine of the quality indicators would be subject to evaluation on the six point scale and Mr Hendrikson elaborated on these. A multi-agency team was and would be involved in the preparatory, scoping and core phases and there would be regular professional dialogue. The core/proportionate on-site phase was expected to take place in the final week in November, with reporting of the emerging findings anticipated in early December.

The eventual public report would seek to address three main issues:

- *How well are the lives of children, young people and their families improving?*

- *How well do services work together to improve the lives of children and families?*
- *How well do services lead and improve the quality of work to achieve better outcomes for children and families?*

A record would be made of the inspection findings and the community planning partners would be asked to submit a joint action plan six weeks after the report was published. The scrutiny partners would offer coordinated and targeted support for improvement.

The Director of Health and Social Care welcomed the good start made to the process and the positive dialogue to date. Mr Hendrikson confirmed that a copy of the PowerPoint presentation used would be circulated to all Members.

The Chair having thanked Mr Hendrikson and Ms Connolly for their presentation, the position was **NOTED**.

6. Presentation – Highland Third Sector Partnership

Ms Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer, the Highland Third Sector Partnership, undertook a short presentation on that Partnership's purpose and role in community planning.

Ms Wylie explained that the key functions of the Third Sector Partnership in each Scottish local authority area were:

- to support the development of volunteering
- to support the promotion/development of social enterprise
- to support the development and growth of a strong, resilient Third Sector
- to facilitate the participation of the Third Sector in public and planning processes.

She further clarified that the Third Sector Interface (TSI) function in Highland was delivered through a partnership of eight pre-existing organisations and, since 2012, a new lead organisation, the Highland Third Sector Partnership (HTSP). Collectively, the partnership currently had 32 very committed members of staff, 111 volunteers, and investment from the Scottish Government of £680,000. While this was the largest funding allocation for any TSP in Scotland, with 9 organisations the Highland partnership was the largest in Scotland. There was in any event concern as to whether this level of funding could be maintained in the longer term, and it was essential to make best use of the resources available.

Ms Wylie outlined various examples of significant HTSP achievements in 2012/13, such as recruiting volunteers and providing advice, information and training to a range of organisations. She highlighted the Partnership's Annual Work Plan, agreed jointly with the Scottish Government and based around a "common services" plan.

Ms Wylie also highlighted aspects of HTSP's role, such as that of statutory provider of engagement in the community planning process. The Partnership's fundamental objective was to act as an interface between the statutory or private sectors and the third sector, and in particular to recognise the stakeholder

interest from the statutory sector. Ms Wylie outlined some of the ways in which HTSP would seek to achieve this, including re-establishing a Third Sector Forum, supporting thematic groups, developing its Web presence and building a strategic and evidenced research base. She would welcome further suggestions on how to optimise the Third Sector contribution to effective partnership working and confirmed that she would in due course seek feedback from community planning partners on how well HTSP was meeting their aspirations as stakeholders. She also emphasised the importance of recognising the status and economic value of the Third Sector within Highland.

Ms Wylie's contribution to date in clarifying and strengthening the Third Sector role within the wider partnership was welcomed and a particular invitation was extended to explore her potential contribution to the Highland Environment Forum. It was confirmed that a copy of the presentation used would be circulated to all Members, together with the details of the HTSP website.

Following discussion, and after thanking Ms Wylie for her presentation, the position was **NOTED**.

7. Carbon CLEVER Highlands

The Chair outlined the nature and purpose of the concept of Carbon CLEVER Highlands, which had arisen out of discussions within the Scottish Cities Alliance, pointing out its potential for a range of positive outcomes, including financial savings, health and other benefits, in addition to climate change considerations.

Members **NOTED** that the Council would be hosting a conference on 8 November 2013 on how to achieve a carbon-neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highlands by 2025.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next scheduled meeting would be held on Tuesday, 17 December 2013, at Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness.

The meeting ended at 1.20 p.m.