

The Highland Community Planning Partnership

COG 23.2.15

Agenda Item	7ii.
Report No	COG 05/15

Local community planning – forums, governance and community participation

Discussion Paper by Head of Policy and Reform

Summary

This paper seeks to prompt discussion with partners on local community planning arrangements with a view to making recommendations to the Board on how District Partnerships might be forums for local community planning.

1. Current arrangements - area-based community planning

- 1.1 The fit between formal Highland-wide and local community planning arrangements has never been particularly clear or consistent across the region. The Lochaber Partnership has the strongest links with the SOA localised and with a formal and comprehensive partnership structure in place. Other local partnerships exist e.g. Sutherland Partnership, Caithness Partnership but connections with the SOA and the Highland CPP are less clear¹. The CNPA seeks to have alignment with the SOA for its area-based plan, affecting the Badenoch and Strathspey area of Highland.
- 1.2 When the governance and accountability arrangements for the Highland CPP were reviewed in 2013, there were concerns about replicating the Lochaber model elsewhere because of a lack of capacity and it was imagined that the links could be organised thematically. Community safety was used as an illustration and the connections locally were to be through:
- Local community safety partnerships of officers – where required
 - Public engagement through Ward Forums and Community Council liaison
 - Local accountability through Area Committees (where elected members could scrutinise police and fire performance)
 - A fit with District Partnerships – at that time not defined as these partnerships were new and focusing on integrating health and social care.
 - 8 pilot areas for bottom up community planning – 4 deprived and 4 rural areas and community safety issues arising from them would be highlighted for intervention.
- 1.3 For community safety the arrangements have progressed over the past 12 months, e.g.
- Engagement with the public and local community representatives at a

¹ The work of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership is reflected in the SOA.

ward level has led to Ward policing plans and these discussions informed the local (regional) policing and SFRS plans and are aligned with the SOA;

- Community Council meetings continued to be attended by Police Scotland.
- Some areas have local community safety partnerships and in Inverness a co-located partnership team has been established (and reported separately to this COG meeting);
- Police Scotland and SFRS report twice a year to Area Committees (x5 see map at Appendix 1) on community safety issues and performance.
- More recently the remit of District Partnerships has been approved and this includes Police Scotland and SFRS involvement. The 9 District Partnerships areas are also shown on Appendix 1. The up-dated remit is attached in the appendix to this report:

http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/67265/item_13_community_learning_and_development

1.4 Arrangements for community safety are probably the most advanced across the partnership (in terms of partnership, governance and community involvement). While these arrangements are evolving, with reporting to Area Committees and District Partnerships there are questions of likely duplication and inefficiency, and at a time when resources are reducing.

1.5 Some other thematic partnerships organised on an area basis include:

- District Partnerships -they deal with health and social care and cover the SOA themes and delivery plans relating to older people and children. Issues relating to health inequalities are also raised in these partnerships. Recent agreement is made to include community learning and development on the agenda. They offer partnership discussion to problem solve, partnership scrutiny and held in public with groups and individuals invited to raise issues. An up-date of the matters considered by District Partnerships is available

http://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/67403/item_11_district_partnerships

- LEADER partnerships – currently under design for the new EU funded programme (covering all of Highland apart from Inverness)

1.6 Another form of area-based community planning is the preparation of Local Development Plans (LDPs). LDPs are prepared to provide policies and site allocations that are then used to determine planning applications for development. In Highland there is a [Highland-wide Local Development Plan](#) published in 2012, and three Area Local Development Plans currently under preparation. These are the [Inner Moray Firth LDP](#) which is due to be adopted by summer 2015; the [Caithness and Sutherland LDP](#) for which a Main Issues Report was recently subject to consultation; and the [West Highland and Islands LDP](#) which is currently at the Call for Sites & Ideas stage with a Main Issues Report to be published later this year.

1.7 Local communities play a vitally important role in preparing these plans and

the Highland Council uses various methods to engage people in the process. The Council also seeks to ensure that these plans reflect community priorities. One of the ways this is being done is by setting out the outcomes that each plan should achieve for people and places in the area based on the Single Outcome Agreement.

- 1.8 Lead officers are invited to describe how they see their area of responsibility operating in a partnership context locally – whether with other service providers, with community representatives or with communities themselves. It would help to know if our approach to local community planning by theme has been helpful.

2. Drivers for re-thinking local community planning

- 2.1 The CPP Board has agreed that the CPP is to engage in dialogue with communities in order to empower them to participate in service planning and delivery (process improvement agreed in 2014). Such dialogue with communities of place will have to take place in local areas. While these may be around service specific issues, we have said to the Board that we will:
1. Review how District Partnerships might be forums for local community planning - to improve alignment between SOA priorities and local needs and intervention, with a report to the March Board.
 2. Report on progress from the Community Learning and Development Strategic Partnership – which requires partners to co-ordinate and target resources to communities in greatest need.
 3. Explore the scope for participatory budgeting as a new means of public participation – as a separate item for this agenda.
 4. Report implications from Community Empowerment Legislation to Board – with agreement in December 2014 for partners to work together on asset transfers to communities and the right for communities to participate in improving outcomes.
- 2.2 The agenda to localise further is supported by:
1. The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy – and its call for a network of local democratic experiments, local decision-making and more participative democracy;
 2. Other aspects of the Community Empowerment Legislation that require the CPP to make all reasonable efforts to secure the participation of those community bodies it considers are “likely to be able to contribute to community planning” and for community bodies to be consulted in preparation of the local outcomes improvement plan.
 3. The national Audit of Community Planning highlighting good practice where the focus is local, joint and done with communities.
- 2.3 The agenda to prioritise and target specific areas for improvement involving all partners and by working with communities is supported by:
1. The Christie Commission – highlighting the need to target public resources more to prevention and reducing inequalities
 2. The statutory requirement to support community learning and development in partnership and to focus on areas in greatest need.

2.4 The Council is beginning a review of its Area Committees. The fit with local community planning is part of that review. The review of Area Committees needs to take into account the fit that District Partnerships have with community planning too.

3. Further considerations

3.1 Community planning is about where decisions about public services are made and by whom. The Community Empowerment legislation expects more decision-making to rest with communities and this means a localising and participative agenda.

3.2 This is challenging where the area covered by the CPP is the largest in the country and where, according to the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, many of public service decisions are centralised, services are designed top-down and some are out with local democratic scrutiny.

3.3 We have a mixture of arrangements across the region, some connected to the work of the Highland CPP better than others. The District Partnership has potential to develop for community safety and community learning and development and with partner agreement; although yet to be tried out. This raises the question of whether other SOA delivery should be considered there too, namely:

- Economic growth;
- Employability;
- Environment;
- Any more local plans and initiatives developed with communities;

And arising from the Community Empowerment legislation:

- Any requests for asset transfers;
- Any requests to participate in improving an outcome.

3.4 If the District Partnership agenda is to broaden issues of agenda management, meeting format and frequency of meetings are raised.

3.5 District partnerships are meetings held in public (not public meetings) but there may be scope to follow them on the same day dealing with service delivery issues raised by communities. Whether webcasting is appropriate would need to be considered.

3.6 Development of District Partnerships needs to consider what type of business is brought there, e.g.:

- For problem solving on delivery issues
- For holding partners to account for their role
- For formal scrutiny of partner performance (e.g. elected member legal role to scrutinise police and fire services)
- For decisions to be made, e.g. participation requests

This will affect who attends and how they are supported and could lead to changes in the Schemes of Delegation so that governance is clear.

- 3.7 It may be that District Partnerships can evolve to become a forum for local community planning at a different pace across the region. This may depend on the views of those currently involved and the appetite for change as well as the operation of other area-based partnerships.
- 3.8 It may be that a transition phase of holding District Partnerships, Area Committees, other Partnerships and Ward Forums on the same day in some localities may be worth exploring.
- 3.9 Conversations with those involved in local partnership forums to gain views will be needed. Re-constructing local partnership and governance forums as well as community participation could be aided by identifying what works best in all of them and seeing if a streamlined approach could improve it and be more efficient.
- 3.10 The changing nature of local community planning will also affect how the Highland CPP operates.

4. Recommendation

4.1 The COG is asked to:

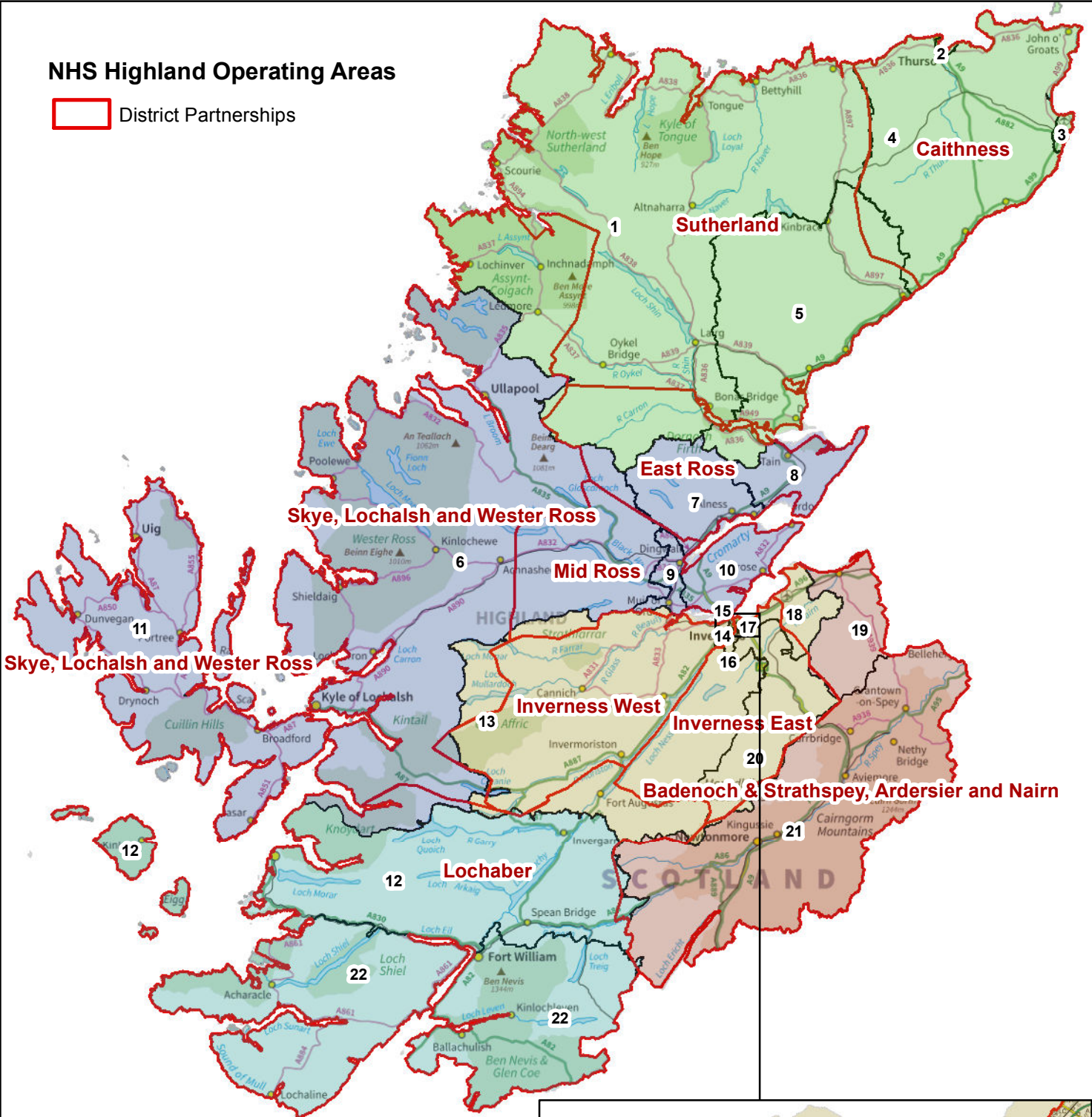
1. Share views on current local community planning arrangements as far as they are aware of them;
2. To describe how they see their area of responsibility operating in a partnership context locally – whether with other service providers, with community representatives or with communities themselves. It would help to know if our approach to local community planning by theme has been helpful or not.
3. To consider the drivers for re-thinking local community planning and to note that the Council will be reviewing its current Area Committee structure.
4. To consider the pros, cons and implications of District Partnerships evolving to become forums for local community planning
5. To agree how that consideration of the pros, cons and implications of District Partnerships evolving to become forums for local community planning can be made with others locally.
6. Agree the proposals for the March Board meeting.


Author: Carron McDiarmid

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NHS Highland Operating Areas

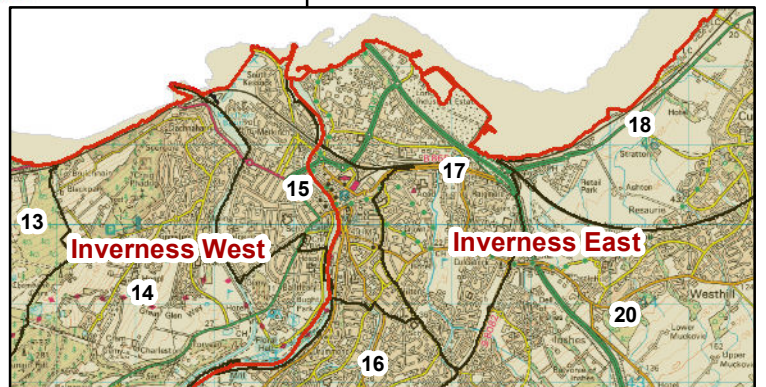
 District Partnerships



 Council Wards (numbered)

Council Area Committees

-  Caithness and Sutherland
-  City of Inverness
-  Lochaber
-  Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey
-  Skye, Ross and Cromarty



**Highland Council and NHS
Highland Administrative and
Operating Areas 2014**

c.j.t.

Date: 21/11/14

1:1,200,000

25 12.5 0 25 Kilometers

1 cm = 12,000 metres

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Development & Infrastructure Service