

The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee – 30 November 2016

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	SCC/ 22/16

Developing Local Priorities for Sutherland (A voice for Sutherland and its People)

Report by Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development

Summary

This report provides Members with an update on the local strategic priorities for Sutherland.

1. Background

- 1.1 Building on the localism agenda and increased delegation of decision making to local committees, each local committee was asked by the Leader to consider developing a set of strategic Council priorities for their area.
- 1.2 It is important to note that these are Council priorities and that there will be opportunity, through the development of local community partnerships, to consider wider shared priorities at a later date.

2. Developing the Sutherland Vision

- 2.1 On 8th August 2016 Sutherland Members were invited to attend a Workshop in Lairg Community Centre, Lairg with a view to discussing and considering “Priorities for Sutherland” At that time Members were asked to consider:
 - Local priorities for their own ward,
 - Priorities that are common throughout Sutherland,
 - Priorities that reflect the geographical diversity of Sutherland
 - Priorities that give “A voice for Sutherland and its People”.
- 2.2 Members were also asked to distinguish between Council priorities and those that would need partnership discussion and agreement. Council priorities might for example be around harbours, tourism, biosphere, roads, transport, infrastructure.
- 2.3 Workshops and discussions have taken place between Sutherland Members to further develop and refine the “Priorities” in the area as a “Voice for Sutherland and its people” as at Appendix 1.

3. Implications

- 3.1 There are no immediate resources, legal, equalities, Climate Change/Carbon Clever Gaelic or rural implications in the report. However the Vision sets out ambitions which would have a positive impact on many of these themes.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to consider and agree these priorities for Sutherland.

Designation: Michelle Morris, Depute Chief Executive/ Director of Corporate Development

Date: 15th November 2016

Author: Garry Cameron, Temporary Ward Manager (Sutherland)

Background Papers:

Appendix 1 – A Voice for Sutherland and its People.

A voice for Sutherland and its People

Numbering of sections does not indicate relative priority

1) COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- Work with other Agencies in the Sutherland Community Partnership to develop Local Outcome Improvement Plans for designated areas, and to develop a credible methodology for assessing the needs of Fragile Areas
- Respond timeously and effectively to community organisations' participation requests
- Actively ensure communities are consulted on proposals to change Council services
- We will continue to support the principle of Participatory Budgeting as resources permit, to strengthen and empower communities to decide together how public monies should be spent

2) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Encourage population growth through inward migration and work with partners to develop measures to discourage outward migration
- Encourage and expand employment opportunities through all forms of economic activity and business development throughout Sutherland
- Ensure that Highland Council jobs stay in Sutherland and even increase through relocation of services.
- Support & promote communities on the NC500 and other tourist routes in developing facilities for tourists and local people alike.
- Support communities in developing Sutherland as a branded tourist destination e.g. genealogy and cultural tourism as well as supporting infrastructures such as "Aires", touring caravans and access to beaches and increased provisions of pull off and view point areas.
- Exploit opportunities to develop commercial and marine activities in harbours for the benefit of local economies.
- Procure goods and services within Sutherland wherever possible and encourage other agencies to do the same

3) INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY

- Continue to lobby National providers, Government, HIE and Community Broadband Scotland to ensure the rollout of broadband to all properties across Sutherland in the shortest possible (reasonable/practical?) timescale.
- Lobby OFCOM and providers for urgent and extensive improvement to the mobile phone network
- Seek to improve the free flow of traffic on single track roads in Sutherland by increasing size of passing places and road widening

- Work with HI trans and forestry operators to transfer timber movement to road to rail in order to protect vulnerable peat roads from collapse
- Recognise the importance of Community Transport in fragile areas by
 - Lobbying to secure long-term funding for Community Transport operators
 - Removing cost from community transport groups by continuing to support ticketing operations
- Lobby for improvement to the Far North rail line to reduce travel time and increase reliability, whilst ensuring the retention of the existing commuter rail links to Moray Firth area.

4) EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure and support development for School Heads and UHI in a coordinated plan for delivering distance learning and vocational training
- Focus on sectors where Sutherland has specific identifiable needs
- Encourage Partnership working to foster perception that Care & Hospitality sectors offer careers in their own right
- Encourage “growing our own” and retaining our young people in well paid and respected careers

5) CARE AND WELLBEING

- Continue to work with Partners to develop and address health & equalities through Partnership working to improve access to Care & Respite throughout Sutherland
- Continue to work with Partners to improve and develop patient transport throughout Sutherland
- Continue partnership working to improve Dementia & Disability friendly environments and foster developments in child care and assisted care for the elderly
- Work with Partners and lobby government in relation to fuel poverty throughout Sutherland

6) LAND USE

- Work with communities and partner agencies to take advantage of powers under land reform legislation with a view especially to Community Asset Transfers and creation of new crofts
- Promote sustainable Forestry Management and develop Partnership working throughout Sutherland