

## Purpose and Role of Chief Officers Group

### Report by the Chief Executive, Highland Council

#### 1. Background

1.1 The introduction of the Community Empowerment Act has redefined community planning in Scotland. Within Highland, the Community Planning Partnership has responded to this change through the expansion in membership of the Partnership, the sharing of responsibility for supporting the Partnership and the introduction of an area dimension through the Community Partnership structure.

1.2 In light of this, it was considered appropriate timing to review the purpose and role of the Chief Officers Group within this structure in order to address a number of emerging questions:

- How to recognise community empowerment and local democracy within CPP structures;
- How to make sense of an expanded membership, including the concept of core members and ad hoc members;
- How to avoid duplication of attendance and business at the COG and Board;
- How the COG should support Community Partnerships;
- How to address the remit and synergy potential of the theme groups.

#### 2. Key messages on the role and purpose of COG

2.1 At its meeting on 2 February 2017, the COG held a wide ranging discussion about its role in the context of the changing environment. A graphic outlining current arrangements was produced to support this discussion, which can be found at appendix 1.

2.2 Key themes from the discussion included:

- The relationship between the Board and COG
  - COG as the engine for the Board. Supporting and feeding the Board but also delivering the Board's actions and strategy and providing compliance assurance.
  - How to avoid duplication in attendance and business between COG and the Board – what structure(s) may support this going forward e.g. status quo or integration of COG and Board.
- The relationship between Community Partnerships and the COG
  - There is currently a disconnect between the COG and Community Partnerships.
  - Community Partnerships look to COG to address issues, develop supports and provide guidance on the delivery requirements.
  - COG as a conduit for communication to Community Partnerships.

- COG as a hub for discussion and debate
  - Strong support for the discursive nature of COG. Allowing areas of work to be debated and developed.
  
- The relationship between COG and current thematic groups
  - Thematic structure – to support the COG and delivery of the SOA.
  - Overly complex structure and needs to be reviewed going forward within the context of the LOIP.
  - Query whether there needs to be a link between thematic structure and the Community Partnerships.

### **3. Principles for Going Forward**

- 3.1 During the course of discussion it was recognised that the Highland CPP is still currently in a period of development. It is therefore challenging to redefine the role of COG at the present time. COG therefore recommends that for an interim period of one year, the purpose and role of COG is defined in 4 key ways:
- As a catalyst and support for Community Partnerships;
  - Is an engine for the Community Planning Board – its ‘action arm’;
  - Will work to simplify and modernise the thematic groups; and
  - Will collaborate on emerging issues.
- 3.2 It is recommended that once the Community Partnerships are active and effective then the role of COG should be further reviewed and redefined.

### **4. Recommendation**

The Community Planning Partnership Board is asked to consider and agree the proposed principles to guide the work of the COG and the wider Partnership over the next year and that a further review to redefine the role of COG will be undertaken following that period.

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Appendix 1: Highland Community Planning Partnerships Structure Graphic

