**Highland Community Planning Partnership
Chief Officers Group**

Date: 22.9.17

Report Title: Supporting more community action and community-run services: following up the actions agreed by the CPP Board.

Report By: Community Action Subgroup

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an up-date for COG on the progress with actions agreed by the Board at its meeting in June 2017 on the Community Gateway idea. A number of discussion points are identified.

2. Recommendations

2.1 The COG is asked to:

i. Note that a check-in event with the original group engaged with, plus others in the HTSI network was held in August 2017. Note that those participating did find common ground and developed thinking on the Gateway idea further as set out in paragraph 5.2.

ii. Note that scoping sessions are organised in October between the Council and HTSI to take forward digital solutions. These are a web based Gateway as a way of finding out what information is available and how to get it and an App matching volunteers to volunteering opportunities (initially for Caithness and Inverness). Prototypes are intended to be developed for COG and Board early next year and they will be informed by referring to event participants and other community bodies identified.

iii. Points for COG discussion and experience to share are set out in:
    a. paragraph 6.2 on a single phone number and co-ordinating staff teams;
    b. paragraph 6.5 on supporting advocacy and mentoring for groups interested in taking on the running of services;
    c. paragraph 6.6 on any other or new action around a partnership approach to community engagement and development; and
    d. paragraph 8.1 on the scope for joining up communication on the work of the CPP.

iv. Note that the quality improvement process in use by NHS Highland is not seen as suitable for understanding the extent of duplication/overlap across all support

providers but the HTSI is offered facilitation to apply the methodology if interested.

    v.   Note that the discussion at COG will inform the report to the CPP Board meeting on 4th October 2017.

3.   **Background on engagement with community bodies on how to support more community-run services**

3.1   Following engagement events with community bodies in August and November 2016 to understand how to support more community-run services, the COG tasked a sub group in February to take forward the ideas emerging. The most favoured idea was the development of Community Gateway; a single point of contact for help, advice and know-how for community bodies.   Community bodies saw it performing 10 things as set out in Appendix 1.

3.2   The sub group met and organised a further engagement event, this time only with organisations supporting community bodies. The event took place in April 2017 and aimed to understand the perspective of support providers on the Gateway idea. The outcome of that engagement showed that while all 10 functions sought of a Gateway are currently provided, they are provided by more than one organisation and often by several. For example, 9 organisations present saw themselves as a single point of contact and 8 saw their role as supporting social enterprise. Support providers are largely public bodies and third sector organisations. All are publicly funded. Support providers involved were not all aware of the range of similar services provided by other organisations.

3.3   There are different views among providers on how problematic this is; but the inefficiency of this provision and the call for simplifying it from community bodies needs a response.

4.   **CPP Board consideration**

4.1   After circulating a draft report around COG, three possible responses were [presented to the CPP Board in June 2017](#) for a steer to guide further work. They were not mutually exclusive and indeed one could lead to the other. They were:

1. Improve the promotion and marketing of the support services available so at least community bodies and providers are more aware of what is available and how to get it;
2. Identify from that provision what needs to improve and if there are inconsistencies and gaps to deal with;
3. Consider reform of the provision, streamlining it and ensuring that those groups that need the most support can get it.

4.2   Some practical help to improve the promotion and marketing of services was offered from the Council by:

- Offering web development time to create a web-based Gateway; and
- Smart Cities Team time to create an App to match volunteers to volunteering opportunities.

As only the HTSI and its local delivery partners currently provide all 10 functions requested of a Community Gateway it was proposed that this work was offered to support them in their current 'gateway' role.

4.3   The Board noted the engagement so far, that the Community Gateway idea was the most favoured and that there appeared to be considerable overlap and duplication across providers of the services sought of a Gateway. It asked for further work to be done and agreed:

1. That before progressing with the digital support offered, the original group of 14 community bodies (from engagement in August 2016) should be consulted on the proposal for a web-based "Gateway" and whether it was sufficient or the right start in progressing the Gateway idea;
2. If so, more detailed proposals on what the "Gateway" would look like should be presented to a future meeting of the Board;
3. Whether the scope for a Rapid Process Improvement Workshop could be explored for understanding where improvement could be made across provision;
4. That not responding to the feedback created risks for the CPP strategically and locally and that we needed to be clear to those involved to date that their input was being taken seriously and that the CPP was exploring ways to make its action more effective.

4.2 This report provides an up-date of the action taken so far, with a view to reporting this along with the views of COG to the next Board meeting on 4th October.

5. Checking-in with community bodies

5.1 The original 14 organisations were invited to a 'check-in event' on 24th August 2017. As two of the original 14 were delivery partners of the HTSI and the HTSI has facilitated and reported on most of the engagement, the HTSI and remaining six delivery partners were invited too. 13 community bodies attended, involving 15 people working in the third sector. The event was chaired by the Council Leader and a [presentation](#) was used to support the discussion and generate ideas.

5.2 The notes from the discussion are attached at Appendix 2. This lists the questions and issues raised by participants and it contains a summary of the ideas they generated and deliberated together. They develop thinking further and are:
1. The Gateway should be a shared development between the Council and the HTSI, recognising that the Council and Councillors are often the first port of call for community bodies;
2. The Gateway as it develops should be designed with new community bodies in mind and tested by them (the group attending offered to help with this);
3. The Gateway should not only help co-ordinate support but also ensure support is followed through (so that support bodies do what they say they will do);
4. The Gateway needs to be both practical and personal. To these ends they felt:
   a. Practical support would be facilitated by the digital offer of support from the Council. Some new features of a web-based Gateway were identified. It would be a way of finding out what is on offer and how to get it. Given current broadband reach it was felt that the App matching volunteers to volunteering opportunities could be prototyped for Inverness and Caithness initially.
   b. Personal support would be required where groups needed more than is available from self-serve on a website. This included: a single phone number to contact to speak to someone who can help and signpost; a way of bringing relevant support staff together to ensure appropriate support is being offered and followed through with delays and blockages removed; and enabling an advocacy/mentoring role from other community bodies with experience to share.
5. The need to develop across public bodies an approach and training to improve community engagement and community development practise.

6. Responding to the feedback from the check-in event

6.1 Scoping sessions for the new digital tools are set up between the Council and the HTSI for October with a view to developing prototypes for CPP COG and Board meetings

early in 2018. These will be developed with the involvement of the groups participating and any others identified. Partner services on their websites would be linked to the Gateway.

6.2   The idea of a single phone number to use and to co-ordinate support across staff teams will be taken into account as part of the work underway in the Council to support the Council's localism agenda; although at this time it is too early say how that will be organised. It would be helpful to share partners' views on:
- the idea of a single phone number to contact;
- how partners currently co-ordinate teams within their organisations to support community bodies;
- how we might consider co-ordinating teams across the CPP that support community bodies, with lessons perhaps from the community safety partnership tackling antisocial behaviour in Inverness.
- whether there is an appetite over the medium to long term to consider co-location of teams with a role to support community bodies in Highland; and
- whether any partner has a sense that integration of support services for community bodies might be worth exploring now or in the future, with lessons perhaps from the integration of health and social care in Highland.

6.3   The idea of enabling an advocacy/mentoring role from other community bodies with experience to share is interesting. It was raised in the context of community groups with experience in taking on the running of Council services having pioneered the approach making it easier for other groups to do the same thing in their communities.

6.4   The advantages for community bodies were seen as tapping into lived experience to avoid the pitfalls, being more aware of risks and how to manage them, saving time by using reference material rather than creating it and having some hand holding and support when difficulties emerge. The advantage for the Council was seen as supporting more community-run services while avoiding potential conflicts where the interests of the Council must be served first by staff.

6.5   Enabling advocacy support and mentoring could apply to other partners and may have been facilitated for community bodies already. Partners are asked of their experience of this approach and if they have lessons to share.

6.6   The idea of developing a partnership approach and training to improve community engagement and community development practise has no doubt been part of the work of the CLD group. In addition the HTSI is piloting some new training on working with community bodies 'Working and Facilitating in Communities Training' with a view to supporting community partnership chairs. Next Spring the Council is co-hosting a 2 day event on facilitative leadership being run by Edinburgh University through the What Works Programme and there would be some places for partners. COG may want to consider what other action may be needed in response.

7.   **Rapid process improvement workshop**
7.1   NHS Highland has expertise in its approach to quality improvement. At the CPP Board meeting it offered to see if the methodology in use could help understand the extent of duplication/overlap among organisations providing support to community bodies with a view to identifying what and how to improve. A discussion with Dr Cameron Stark explored how the approach may be applied and it concluded that it was less suitable to use in a multi-agency context especially with such a large range of providers across a number of sectors, without a sense of their willingness or consensus on the need for change and no way of ensuring controls could be put in place to effect any change

identified. However an offer was made to the HTSI of facilitating the process for them, given their core business is supporting community bodies.

8.   Responding to community bodies
8.1   Reports from all the engagement events have been shared with all participants attending. It might be helpful for those attending the November 2016 event to receive an up-date on action by email or newsletter. This could be distributed via HTSI as event organisers. Alternatively it could be included with any other communication planned by the CPP on e.g. the difference the engagement made in developing the HOIP and anything to report from Community Partnerships. Particular engagement will continue with the reference group and any other community bodies to be involved in the development of new digital tools.

9.   Next steps
9.1   COG is asked to discuss the points raised in the report to help shape the report for the CPP Board on 4th October 2017.

Date: 13.9.17

Author: Carron McDiarmid, Head of policy and Reform (on behalf of the community action sub group).

Background Papers:

- Analysis of the feedback from community bodies Nov 2016
- Stakeholder event April 2017
- Community Gateway CPP Board June 2017

Functions requested of a Community Gateway, from engagement with community bodies.

A community gateway would:
1. be a single point of contact for help, advice and know-how;
2. provide support to grow social enterprise;
3. help to access and secure funding;
4. enable training;
5. help to gather views on community needs and different perspectives, including conflict resolution;
6. offer advice on legal issues, good governance and business planning;
7. help to acquire buildings and other assets;
8. connect volunteers and volunteering opportunities and to assets held by others;
9. share good practice; and
10. offer HR support.

Notes from discussion with community bodies on the Community Gateway Idea
Highland Council HQ 24.8.17

Returning Participants (from the original group consulted in 2016)
Maureen Ross (Seaboard Centre), Suzanne Barr (Abriachan Forest Trust),Duncan Bryden (Strathdearn Trust), Fiona Begg (formerly of Kyle of Lochalsh Community trust), Stephen Pennington (Highland Home carers), Katrina McNab and Lynn Bain (Pultneytown people's Project), Becky Richmond (Ferintosh Community Council), Anne Sikorski (Skye and Lochalsh CVO).
Apologies: Alan Michael (Men's Shed), Karen Derrick (VABS), Jo Ford S&L CVO).

Further participants - HTSI and other delivery partners
Mhairi Wyllie and Ian Donald (HTSI), Allan Tait (Caithness Voluntary Groups), Flora McKee (Voluntary Action Lochaber), Jamie McJimpsey (Ross-shire Voluntary Action), June MacLeod (Signpost).

Highland Council
Leader of Highland Council Cllr Davidson, Carron McDiarmid, Alison Clark, Pablo Mascarenhas (Chief Executive's office), Darren MacLeod (Digital Services Manager) and Brian Robertson (Graduate Development Officer).

Apologies from the CPP sub group: Bill Alexander (Highland Council), Murray Fergusson (CNPA) and Douglas Wilby (HLH).

Welcome and presentation
The Council Leader welcomed everyone to the meeting. A presentation was made by Carron McDiarmid. This covered: the development of the Community Gateway idea; the interest in it from the Council and Community Planning Partnership (CPP); the work to follow it up at a larger engagement event in November 2016 (which favoured it and identified 10 aspects of a Community Gateway) and an event with support providers in April 2017. The issues identified so far through this engagement were summarised. An offer of support from the Council to develop a web based gateway and an App to match volunteers to volunteering opportunities was made. Whether this offer was sufficient or a good place to start was discussed and other ideas were sought.

Discussion on the issues and other ideas
Participants took part in conversations during and after the presentation and these generated a number of questions, issues and new ideas. These are recorded in Annex 1. On the Gateway, conversations developed around it being:
 • A digital solution;
 • As a person to contact and a single phone number;
 • As a building/place; and
 • As good community development practice.

The ideas finding favour among the group were:
  1. The Gateway as a shared development between the Council and HTSI

2. The Gateway is designed with the needs of new community groups in mind – and tested out (the group attending offered to be a reference group)
3. The Gateway's purpose is to co-ordinate support and ensure it is followed through
4. The support to be co-ordinated needs to be:
    a. Practical – with information, contacts and mechanisms available clearly explained. To this end it was seen as worthwhile to:
        i. develop a website on a shared platform between the Council and HTSI – with preferred features identified by the group
        ii. prototype an App to match volunteers to volunteering opportunities (initially Inverness and Caithness)
    b. Personal – with:
        i. a team of people brought together regularly to ensure support requested is followed through (this team needs to exist within the Council given requests made to it and it could expand to include relevant partners);
        ii. a single phone number to contact;
        iii. community groups with expertise paid to support new community groups or established groups that want to run new services.
5. The need to develop an approach and training to improve community engagement and community development practice across public bodies.

Next steps
1. Find out about the community assets team approach in North Ayrshire Council and any related plans that Alyn Housing Society might have and discuss potential new arrangements within the Council – action: Highland Council September/October
2. Share the feedback from this session with the CPP Chief Officers Group (September) and Board (October) for CPP views (especially on the funding for community groups to help other groups and staff training in community engagement and development) and inform those attending this session of the outcome – action: sub group of COG
3. Create the plan for developing digital solutions and engaging the reference group – action: Highland Council and HTSI

Questions, issues and ideas raised by participants

On community bodies
- There is a lot of expertise within the 3rd sector.
- The quality of that expertise could be shared better. There is as much to learn from what doesn't work and what is frustrating and how to overcome these as there is from what does work. Talent and expertise is out there but it is disconnected.
- We need to find a way of making the connections better. How can we find and pull in that expertise?
- Community bodies themselves feel they have become the experts from their lived experience rather than expertise sitting within support organisations alone. This expertise has often been built from necessity as support providers have not always responded well.
- Community bodies running services locally have the same pressures as those in the business world – they must respond well to people relying on their service.

On the HTSI
The HTSI does deliver all of the services requested of a Community Gateway and many are their core business (although less so on legal and HR expertise). It is acknowledged that:
- there is a need to promote their services better;
- there are questions about quality and consistency of service (as there are for all public services); but
- there is no additional capacity or new resources to develop new or expanded services.

On the Highland Council
- For community bodies starting out, the Council is often seen as the first port of call. Sometimes it is directly to an elected Member.
- There are examples of Highland Council not following through or responding to community groups seeking to run community services. This is very frustrating for those volunteering in their communities. Even if feedback to groups is honest about how long some things will take that would be better than no feedback at all. Honesty is needed for good working relationships. The Council needs to have a way of checking 'have we done what we said?'

On support providers generally
- The landscape of who provides what may be cluttered and with duplication in services but that doesn't mean there is lots of capacity – especially if everyone involved is busy helping community groups.
- We acknowledge current provision cannot be seen to be efficient.
- There are political issues involved with the Government's current approach to funding different organisations to do similar things.
- We don't have a body that links all the expertise together in different organisation e.g. HTSI, HC, NHS Highland etc.

- There is no additional resource to create something new, other than re-directing staff time.
- It's not likely that organisations will give something up and in any case some communities are interested in particular bodies/support providers.
- There are common concerns affecting all public bodies and those offering support – strategic issues of concern around the impact of Brexit and our aging population. These shared concerns may offer a way into discussing what needs to change to support communities better.

On the Gateway itself
- Is the Gateway about re-branding the HTSI and delivery partner services given their core business? Is it the Council given it's often a first port of call? Is it independent – but whom?
- A shared service/platform between the Council and HTSI was suggested and felt to be of benefit.
- It was suggested that Albyn Housing Society was developing something like a Gateway for older people. This should be followed up to avoid further duplication.
- Gateway arrangements need to be built around the key steps a new community organisation would take. This should shape the structure of the Gateway and the guidance it would offer. It needs to reflect the different types of knowledge required, i.e. knowledge that:
  o Is practical with relevant mechanisms available clearly explained – this can be accessed from web-based information;
  o Is about problem solving and know-how and can enable creativity. This includes helping groups work through concerns, difficult issues and pioneering new approaches – this type of ese require conversations and a personal response (telephone and face to face support) is required.

Digital solutions?
- A website that details all providers and services could be a quick way to start promoting what is available.
- If the website was visual, like a community infrastructure map that would be easier to use.
- Could it have an on-line chat facility available in real time? Those providing the service need to know and be trained in where to direct people for assistance.
- Maintaining and refreshing the information on the website has to be resourced, but those offering support should maintain that.
- It is worth prototyping a web-based Gateway, but trialling for a specific area wasn't seen as helpful - so prototyped on a Highland scale with local information easy to reach.
- HTSI does have a database for matching volunteers to volunteering opportunities, but it is not widely known about and maybe not fit for purpose now.

- We acknowledged that a matching service has to be mindful of data protection, quality of placements and the need for conversations before placements. These are risks to be managed anyway and the App itself wouldn't overcome those but could make it easier to get conversations started on placements.
- We acknowledged that volunteers often come through their connections with other people locally so identifying volunteers wouldn't be reliant only on an App, but it might help to manage a matching process.
- There is interest in developing a prototype App in Inverness and in Caithness – identified given broadband connectivity.

A Gateway as a person to contact and a single phone number?
- North Ayrshire Council has a Community Assets Team as part of its Vibrant Communities approach. It is comprised of staff who sit in different Council services but they are brought together weekly to channel community requests and to ensure they are not ignored or delayed. There is one point of contact for gathering requests (phone number) and the team then co-ordinates the response. We should find out how that operates to see if it could inform the Council's approach.

- Can we have a system of community groups logging their enquiry with the Council. That would make sure it is not lost. Could community bodies track how their enquiry is being dealt with and follow it up if there is no response? The Council needs to have a way of checking 'have we done what we said?'

- Those with most to offer from current providers were seen to be the Council, HTSI and HIE, but it would depend on the issue. But could relevant people be brought together expanding the North Ayrshire Council idea to include partners?

- Face to face support should be provided also from community bodies that have expertise to share. This could be part of the personal Gateway service, commissioned and enabled by the public bodies involved. This would also assist public bodies involved who might otherwise be conflicted in their support to a community group as they also have to act in the interest of their organisations. Payment for this 3rd sector support would be needed.

A Gateway as a place/building?
- The idea of a community information centre was raised where information could be accessed and people could be connected to others with expertise.
- The possibility of co-locating public sector and HTSI staff was queried. Relationship benefits were highlighted.

A Gateway as good community development practice
- Training is needed on how to conduct community engagement and development effectively. Identifying who needs this training and rolling it out is required. This training would support the positive attitudes required in public bodies to support more community action.