

Agenda Item	9
Report No	HC/39/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: The Highland Council

Date: 26 October 2017

Report Title: **The Council Programme – Progress Report**

Report By: The Chief Executive

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1** The attached report sets out the steps that have been taken to engage more widely and in detail with members on a cross-party basis, and at a local level, to develop the Council Programme. The attached appendix provides the most up to date drafting of the commitments under the 5 priority themes: a place to live; a place to learn; a place to thrive; a welcoming place and a redesigned Council.
- 1.2** In addition, the report describes the next steps that will be taken to engage publicly, to develop local plans and to determine the actions that will deliver the Programme priorities. These actions will form the Council's Corporate Plan and will come to Council in December for members' consideration and approval.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Members are asked to
- i. Note the progress that has been made to engage collaboratively on the development of the Council Programme;
 - ii. Consider and approve the revised commitments under the 5 priority themes at Appendix 1 (to follow); and
 - iii. Consider and agree the proposed next steps.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council first considered the draft Programme at its meeting on 7 September 2017. The following week there was an all members seminar at which each of the priority themes was discussed in detail and a number of amendments were proposed. The draft Programme was updated on the back of this discussion and then taken to local committees across Highland for further discussion and amendment. The Leader has also met with the Youth Convener to seek her feedback.
- 3.2 So far, the local area priorities and the draft Council Programme have been discussed at 3 local committees: the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee, Sutherland County Committee and the Lochaber Local Committee; and at the following meetings of local committee members: Nairnshire Committee, Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee and Caithness Committee. A meeting with the Ross and Cromarty Committee members is scheduled for the week prior to Council but will take place after the deadline for this report. A meeting with City of Inverness Area Committee members has been arranged for 7 November 2017.
- 3.3 The 5 priority themes and associated priorities have been adjusted to take into account these discussions and will be further updated following the meeting with Ross and Cromarty members. Once this has been done, they will be circulated as an appendix to this report, as a late paper for consideration by the full Council on 26 October 2017. City of Inverness Area Committee members will likewise have an opportunity to consider the Programme themes and commitments and how they are reflected in their own local area priorities.

4. Programme Priorities

- 4.1 At the members' seminar, participants were asked to rank the priorities in order of importance. Those considered the most important have been placed first in each theme and they will be the areas on which the Administration will particularly prioritise activity over the next 12-18 months. These are:
- Provide homes across the Highlands that are responsive to local needs
 - Strive to achieve the highest standards in our schools and to reduce the attainment gap
 - Seek new, faster and better ways to ensure superfast broadband and digital services are provided to all communities across Highland
 - Work with businesses and partners to actively promote the Highlands as a desirable and welcoming place to work, live, invest and create businesses
 - Accelerate work to bring decision making to local areas
- 4.2 It is important to stress that the prioritisation of the above 5 commitments does not mean that other areas will fail to make progress. However, it had been agreed at the all-member seminar that identifying the top level priorities would be a useful way for the Council to focus increasingly scarce resources in the next 12-18 months on the areas that matter most.
- 4.3 All of the remaining commitments will still be advanced over the lifetime of the Programme. Some are already well underway, like the Apprenticeship Programme, and are likely to be fully in place well within the next 12 months. Others will be progressed from day one and will continue far beyond the next 5 years, such as the Council's continuing commitment to promote and support the Gaelic language and culture. Whilst others will evolve over the period or be responsive to opportunities for lobbying and influencing the Scottish and UK Governments. Members will have the opportunity

to review the top 5 priorities each time the Programme is refreshed at Council.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The measures and actions required to deliver the Programme in the form of the draft Council Corporate Plan will be submitted to Council for approval at the earliest opportunity. This will indicate the key performance indicators, actions and the timeframes proposed for delivering the commitments in the Programme. The Leader and Strategic Chairs are currently meeting with Directors and senior managers to develop the draft Corporate Plan, this work will be concluded after the final Programme has been approved. There will be an annual review of the Corporate Plan at Council to enable amendments or new measures or actions to be considered.
- 5.2 Local committees are in the process of revising their local priorities so that they dovetail with the Council's high level Programme themes. Further engagement is also planned with the business sector across Highland and events are being planned for the coming months. The final approved Programme will be published on the Council website and Community Councils will all be sent a link to this. Local Committees will lead on overseeing the implementation of programme commitments at a local level, whilst the Strategic Committees will do the same for the high level Programme priorities.

6. Implications

- 6.1 Resource – there will be major resource implications for the Council arising from the approved Council Programme as it will identify the areas where council resources should be focused. The detailed implications of this will be worked through as part of the process for developing the corporate plan actions.
- 6.2 Legal – there are no specific legal implications arising from the Council Programme.
- 6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – the council Programme represents a significant shift in emphasis towards local and community-focused service delivery and also specifically recognises the need to address issues related to poverty and rurality.
- 6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – the Programme includes a specific commitment to work with communities to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- 6.5 Risk – there is a risk around the extent to which all of the Programme commitments can be successfully delivered over the next 5 years in the context of reducing budgets and uncertainty around the potential impacts of Brexit. Monitoring of implementation and progress will be through the scrutiny of the Corporate Plan at Council, Service plans at Strategic committees, and locally by area committees.
- 6.6 Gaelic – the Programme includes a specific commitment to promote and support the Gaelic language and culture.

Designation: William Gilfillan

Date: 16 October 2017

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Appendix 1 – to follow