

Agenda Item	6(b)
Report No	CIA/40/17

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: City of Inverness Area Committee

Date: 30 November 2017

Report Title: Developing Local Priorities – City of Inverness and Area

Report By: Director of Development and infrastructure and Inverness City Area Manager

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council Programme is being revised. This report provides the link between the themes of the new Council Programme and those which have been developed for the City of Inverness
- 1.2 The proposed City Priorities (**Appendix1**) underline objectives for our Communities and links to the Councils Programme. This will be important in developing the relationship between the City and the Highlands as well as supporting the case more investment from both the Private and Public Sector.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - i. Note the links between the Councils Programme and the City Priorities and;
 - ii. Consider and agree the City Priorities for submission to Council

3. Background

3.1 **Population and Infrastructure** - Between 1991 and 2011 the population of Inverness grew by almost 18% to over 79,000. The Council's Development Plan allocates land for over 9,000 new homes and 190 ha of employment land. The strategy for growth focuses on strengthening the city centre, restricting urban sprawl and increasing the sustainability of existing neighbourhoods including increased opportunities for active travel and use of public transport. Growth will be delivered by directing development to key regeneration sites, including the city centre, and to areas allocated for major expansion on the city's southern and eastern flanks. Expansion is contained to the north by the Moray Firth and to the west and south by higher land and steep slopes.

3.2 Future growth will be enabled by significant improvements to transport infrastructure already in preparation or underway, including:

- The new West Link road joining the Southern Distributor Road with the A82 trunk road, currently under construction and due for completion in 2020;
- Dualling of the A96 trunk road between Inverness and Nairn; and
- A significant programme of improvements/upgrading to Inverness Rail Station.

Longer term proposals include a new "East Link" connecting the A9 with the A96, a new rail halt at Inverness Airport and upgrading of the Longman Interchange at the junction between the A9 and A82.

3.3 **The City Vision themes** fit with the themes within the draft Council Programme, being;

- A place to live
- A place to learn
- A place to thrive
- A welcoming place
- A redesigned Council

3.4 **City Vision** - (which will be referred to within the new City Centre Development Brief) has the following themes;

Distinctive and Attractive (A Place To Live)

Inverness takes pride in being a high quality city that celebrates and safeguards its unique combination of natural, cultural and built heritage, in particular its historic River setting.

A Great Place to Live (A Place To Learn/Live)

The city centre is a thriving, desirable place to live, supporting a diverse, socially-inclusive Community that enjoys convenient access to services, public transport, green infrastructure and recreational facilities.

A Great Place for Business (A place to thrive)

The city centre has a strong and diverse economy based on a vibrant mix of uses that includes prime business accommodation, a retail hub for the Highlands and Islands and an attractive destination for leisure and recreation.

A Great Place to Visit (A Welcoming Place)

Our internationally-acclaimed tourist destination is best known for showcasing Highland culture and hospitality with a lively retail core and leisure and recreational activities that attract local, national and international visitors.

Accessible, Easy and Safe to Move Around (A Welcoming Place)

A network of safe, attractive routes gives clear priority to walking, cycling and use of public transport while ensuring efficient access for vehicles, including parking.

- 3.5 The linkage of the themes within the draft Council Programme to the City Priorities detailed in **Appendix1** gives structure to the regional status of the City and Area. The Highlands thrives on collaboration between organisations and communities, and The City Priorities illustrate that the City recognises its role in supporting a strong and vibrant Highlands.

4 Conclusion

- 4.1 The above gives a basis for the Committee to consider adopting the City Priorities detailed within **Appendix1** for the City of Inverness and Area. They are designed to support the growth and development of our Communities and provide for Localism to make an increasing contribution.

5 Implications

- 5.1 Resource – There are no Resource Implications as a result of agreeing the recommendations within this report.

Legal – There are no Legal Implications as a result of agreeing the recommendations within this report

Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – In considering the terms of the report the Committee should note that any City Priorities agreed will be applied within the terms of current Policies.

Climate Change/Carbon Clever – The proposed City Priorities have been prepared in the context of Council Policies in support of Climate Change/Carbon Clever initiatives and objectives

Risk – The Proposed City Priorities have been prepared noting the need to reduce risk to the Council.

Gaelic – There are no Gaelic Implications as a result of this report.

Designation: Inverness City Area Manager
Head of Planning and Environment

Date: 8 November 2017

Author: David Haas, Malcolm Macleod

Background Papers: None

Priority themes

The council will deliver its strategic goals by focusing on a number of high level priority themes.

1. A place to live
2. A place to learn
3. A place to thrive
4. A welcoming place
5. A redesigned council

A place to live

The Council's first priority is to the people of the Highlands: the people who live and work here, those who grow up here, have settled here and grow old here.

We want to make the Highlands an even better place to live. For that to happen we need attractive and sustainable communities. Working with others we need to attract more people to make the Highlands their home and encourage our younger residents to stay here.

The Highlands has a unique culture and heritage, it has some of the cleanest air, purest water and most renowned unspoiled natural environments in the world and we must ensure these precious commodities are protected and enhanced for future generations.

Key priorities

1. Provide homes across the Highlands that are responsive to local needs so that both young and old have a secure roof over their head. We need to provide affordable homes for younger generations and families; housing in areas where attracting professionals is a challenge; accommodation for the homeless; and homes where the elderly and vulnerable can be supported to live independently.
2. Encourage more engaged, better informed, more resilient, sustainable and attractive communities by helping and strengthening tenant and community representation structures.
3. Identify and recognise the unique challenges of living in rural and remote areas of the Highlands and ensure council policies and the provision of services have local people in mind. Work with the Scottish Government and other public authorities to do the same.
4. Encourage and assist the regeneration of our town centres and high streets across the Highlands.
5. Work with communities and partners to mitigate against and adapt to climate change whilst raising awareness around sustaining and improving our natural, built and cultural environment.
6. Continue to promote and support the Gaelic language and culture through the Gaelic Language Plan.

A Place to Live – City of Inverness and Area Priorities

- **Deprived Communities** - Working with our partners we will seek public sector infrastructure investment and training opportunities in our deprived communities to create jobs and improve quality of life. Investment will be focussed on improving the quality of housing and the surrounding areas along with improvements to schools and other community buildings.
- **Housing** - Working with partners to deliver more housing in the City and Area, including affordable housing, whilst ensuring that infrastructure is in place to support this growth. We need to ensure the use of all the tools available to us to open up opportunities for more city and town centre residential developments, including compulsory purchase if appropriate. Special attention will be given to creating community environments and neighbourhood areas into new housing schemes.
- **Long Term Planning** – Ensuring that long term masterplans are in place to direct growth in future expansion areas such as at **East Inverness, Longman East and Torvean**. This will help identify opportunities for developer or other partner contributions to infrastructure. Communities will be fully involved in the preparation and delivery of these masterplans.
- **City Centre Regeneration** – Supporting Partners in and contributing to the delivery of the outcomes set out in the City Centre Development Brief, including:
 1. Projects underway:
 - High quality redevelopment of the former **Inverness College Longman and Midmills site**
 - Delivery of Priority projects of the Inverness Townscape Heritage Project, including the **A&I Welders building and Station Square**
 - The new **Inverness Justice Centre**
 - Repair and restoration of **Inverness Town House**
 2. Projects in development:
 - Improvements to streets surrounding **Inverness Railway Station** to promote walking and cycling whilst ensuring that **Academy Street** remains an important through route
 - Redevelopment of the **Porterfield site and Viewhill House**
 - Bringing redundant buildings and space back into residential use such as redundant upper floors of retail units
 - Diversifying the mix of City Centre Housing by encouraging a broader mix of housing tenure, including student accommodation.
- **Town Centre Regeneration** - Supporting regeneration of town and village centre sites throughout the area – *specific examples?*

- **Sport and Recreation** – Delivering **Inshes Park Phases 2 & 3** (funded through developer contributions) and working with partners to deliver further sports and recreational facilities across the City with a focus on those identified in Development Briefs.
- **Active Travel** – delivering the £6.7m Inverness Active Travel project, funded through Community Links +, and working with partners to improve links between the **City Centre, River Ness and canal-side, Inverness Campus and the east of the City** through projects like the **North Bridge at the Campus**.

A place to learn

Schools are at the centre of the lives of our citizens and local communities and the democratic control of schools is at the heart of local government. We will continue to fight to ensure it remains so.

We are committed to ensuring all children reach their full potential. This includes our determination to close the attainment gap for those from more disadvantaged communities and meeting the needs of all children including those with additional support needs.

Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and experience, regardless of age or background.

Key priorities

1. Strive to achieve the highest standards in all our schools, and reduce the attainment gap, so every young person has the opportunity and skills to succeed by supporting an accessible and broad curriculum for all.
2. Grow and retain our own skilled workforce in the Highlands; making it an exceptional place to come and study, and to remain to work.
3. Provide services that support all our children to have the best start in life.
4. Continue the programme of refurbishment and renovation of Highland schools and address the need for additional capacity.
5. Protect the delivery of education in our schools by implementing an ambitious school's management programme to support our Head Teachers and staff, securing long-term sustainability, especially in our rural communities.
6. Promote the wider use of technology and blended teaching approaches to support the way our children learn.

A Place to Learn – City of Inverness and Area Priorities

- **Schools** – Ensuring that the continued growth of the City, Towns and Villages is accompanied by investment in the early years, primary and secondary school estate through renovation, extensions and by the delivery of new schools, all as agreed through the City of Inverness Area Committee
- **Inverness Campus** - Supporting the continued success of **Inverness Campus** as a place of learning and research, and as a recreational hub for the east of the City
- **University of the Highlands and Islands** – Developing the presence of the **University of the Highlands and Islands** within the City and Area, to enhance options for the retention of young people within the City and Region and encourage sector growth in industries.
- **Gaelic Medium Education** – Working with partners to identify opportunities for the continued growth of Gaelic medium education.

3.3 A place to thrive

We will work for a Highlands that includes and supports all children and adults to lead fulfilled and productive lives, free from poverty and discrimination. No matter where they live or whatever their needs, all of our citizens should always know what support is available, where they can find help, and whether that help is right for them.

We recognise that economic growth is critical to enabling our communities not just to survive, but to thrive. We will do all we can to strengthen our infrastructure; support the growth of new and existing businesses; and the creation of new jobs

Key priorities

1. Urgently seek new and better ways to ensure superfast broadband and digital services are provided to all communities across the Highlands.
2. Support children to be protected, healthy, safe and responsible by delivering a whole system approach to integrated children's services.
3. All people should live a life free from poverty and discrimination and benefit from good mental health and wellbeing. We will work with our partners to achieve this.
4. Build on the work of the City Region Deal to help businesses to fully cultivate commercial opportunities including the development of international markets.
5. Promote and support Highland business from all sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, forestry and aquaculture as well as newer technology-driven businesses.
6. With Government, HITRANS, SUSTRANS and others, deliver improvements to our key transport links.
7. With partners and transport providers ensure fewer people experience transport as a barrier to accessing services, employment or leisure activities, including working with communities to develop community transport schemes.
8. Work with NHS Highland and others to grow and invest in community based services for adults across the Highlands.

A Place to Thrive – City of Inverness and Area Priorities

- **City/Region Deal** – Delivering the City/Region deal to lever in additional infrastructure investment, improve connectivity and enhance the skills of our young people across the Highlands.
- **Key Transport Infrastructure** – Working with partners to deliver infrastructure improvements including action to promote public transport use:
 - Stage 2 of the Inverness West Link (and relocated Torvean golf course)
 - A9/A96 Inshes to Smithon Link (East Link) and Inshes Junction improvements
 - Longman Interchange
 - Dalcross Railway Station
 - Inverness Railway Station (with regeneration of Station Square/Academy Street to improve linkages to the wider City Centre and bus station/car parks)
 - Developing national and international routes through Inverness Airport
 - Bus Services – make sure that bus services provide for communities to access employment opportunities and generally support Community vibrancy
 - Improvements to bus transport throughout the area, including investigating opportunities for park and ride and bus priority measures
- **Inverness Castle/Upper Bridge Street** – Working with partners to enable the move of the Scottish Courts Service from Inverness Castle and turning the castle and surrounding area into a major visitor attraction for the City and Region.
- **Wi-Fi** – Working with our partners to deliver City Centre Wi-Fi and other projects to deliver SMART Cities; as well as playing a full part in the Scottish Cities Alliance. In addition, supporting the further roll-out of superfast broadband throughout the area.
- **Business Development** - We will encourage new businesses to locate in the City Centre.
- **Partnership Working** – We will ensure that the Members of the Inverness Community Partnership work to deliver commitments made in respect of service delivery through the Adult Plan, Childrens Plan and agreed Locality Plans.
- **Air Quality and Carbon Emissions** – Actively pursue improving Air Quality within urban environments and within the City and Area.

3.4 A welcoming place

The Highlands is an exceptionally safe and friendly place. Our natural environment is famous for its beauty as well as for supporting a wide range of sports and leisure activities. We have an increasingly diverse population and we welcome people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds who wish to live, work or visit here. We also welcome people who wish to create businesses and those that can work in key sectors where we have skill shortages.

Key priorities

1. With businesses and partners identify “pull factors” to actively promote the Highlands as a desirable and welcoming place to work, live, invest and create businesses.
2. Collaborate with our partners to develop integrated workforce planning strategies to address skills gaps, attract key workers and encourage young people to return after studying away. Engage with Scottish and UK governments to develop measures that allow for greater workforce freedom of movement.
3. Tourism continues to be of massive importance to our economy and we will work with business and partners to promote and develop the Highlands as a world class, year round, tourist destination.
4. Continue to implement a wide range of measures with our partners so that communities feel safer around roads and to reduce accidents.

A Welcoming Place – City of Inverness and Area Priorities

- **Tourism development** – Working with our BIDs and other partners to develop, enhance and promote the tourism offer and visitor experience in the City, Loch Ness and wider area
- **Inverness Castle** – Work with the Scottish Government and other partners to deliver an international quality visitor attraction that will open this iconic building to the public and have a significant positive impact on tourism in Inverness and the wider Highlands. It forms part of the City Region Deal and is included in Scotland's Programme for Government.
- **Riverside Arts** - Working with partners to enhance visitor experience by seeking to deliver further attractions for the city centre including the riverside arts trail
- **Victorian Market** - Developing the Victorian Market as a major attraction
- **Old Town** – Reinforcing the Old Town's identity as a unique visitor attraction that accommodates independent shops, niche businesses and unique leisure destinations
- **Wayfinding** – Developing a template for all new signage systems, maps and other devices conveying information about location and directions to visitors and resident in Inverness City Centre
- **Waste Solutions** – Piloting and promoting innovative solutions for waste storage and collection in Inverness City Centre
- **Safer Communities** – Working with Partners (in particular Police Scotland and Inverness Business Improvement District) in making Inverness one of the most family and visitor friendly cities in the UK, including 20mph zones throughout the residential areas of the city
- **Integrated Transport** – Work with transport providers to ensure route timetables allow for improved connections both between individual services and between different transport modes

3.5 A redesigned council

The council will be more open-minded to new ways of delivering services; more commercially-minded, raising income to sustain services and jobs across the region; and more community-minded by listening locally. The council will also support community bodies to do more and target support to particular people and places in most need.

Staff are central to identifying and making the changes needed and they will be empowered to do this.

Key priorities

1. Accelerate work to bring decision-making to local areas.
2. Develop new ways to deliver services that are affordable, efficient and local in order to be fit to embrace future challenges.
3. Consider the key recommendations from the Commission on Highland Democracy, which seek to reinvigorate local democracy.
4. Adopt a commercially minded and innovative approach to generate income to support council services and jobs across the region.
5. Many communities across the Highlands are increasingly ambitious to control more assets and land with increasing interest in local service delivery. The council will work with public agencies and communities to simplify our processes and to innovate and spread good practice.
6. Align the Council's strategic and financial priorities and aspire to work more closely with our public sector partners and businesses to understand and, where we can, to support their priorities.

A redesigned council – City of Inverness and Area Priorities

- **Council Services** - Continuing to rationalise office space throughout the city and area, with the priority being to consolidate within City and Town Centre locations
- **Localism** – We will use our best endeavors to develop proposals which allow for decisions that affect our communities, to be made locally and we will take steps to implement those powers without delay