

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	SCC/16/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Sutherland County Committee

Date: 23 August 2018

Report Title: **A Voice for Sutherland and its People - Priorities for Sutherland County Committee**

Report By: Head of Policy and Reform

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this reports to provide Committee with an update of the priorities for Sutherland County Committee

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Consider and approve "A Voice for Sutherland and its People", the local strategic priorities for Sutherland, including the stated priorities for the next 12 months.
- i. Agree to promote these with the wider Council membership and as part of the Council's Programme 2017-22.
- ii. Note that there will be opportunity, through the Sutherland Community Partnership and engagement with partner agencies, community bodies and communities to consider wider shared priorities over the Council's term.
- iii. Note that further work will be done to identify how the local priorities agreed can be supported by staff and any other Council resources. This will include considering how to best measure progress. Some priorities are already well aligned to the Council's Programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 Building on the localism agenda and increased delegation of decision making to local committees, each local committee was asked by the Leader in 2016 to consider developing a set of strategic Council priorities for their area. This led to the development of “A Voice for Sutherland and its People” which was adopted by Sutherland County Committee in September 2017.

4. Updating A Voice for Sutherland and Its People

- 4.1 During the discussion at Committee in September 2017 a number of clarifications were made and several additional priorities were discussed. It was agreed the priorities should be refined to reflect the discussion at Committee and that they should be aligned with the Council Programme “Local Voices, Highland Choices”. Sutherland Members met in June 2018 to consider the refinements to the priorities and how they align with the Council programme.
- 4.2 The updated Area Priorities are attached as Appendix One. Some require partnership working locally, for example through community partnerships and others focus on working with and lobbying other public bodies.
- 4.3 The local priorities also reflect the Council’s Programme; Local Voices – Highland Choices. There are themes around: a place to live; a place to learn; a place to thrive, a welcoming place and a redesigned Council. How the Council’s Programme is to be delivered is set out in the Corporate Plan. Where local priorities are aligned to the Council Programme and Corporate Plan these are mapped in the appendix to the corresponding reference numbers and priorities.

At the meeting in June 2018 Members also identified the immediate priorities for the next 12 months These are:

- Housing Development
- NC500 – promotion, impact on Council services
- Balanced / equitable HC capital investment
- UHI/NHC/schools – equality of access to courses
- Community engagement in budgeting decisions

5. Implications

- 5.1 There are no immediate Legal, Risk or Gaelic implications at this stage. Implementation of the priorities will bring positive implications for the Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) and for the environment (Climate Change/Carbon Clever).
- 5.2 There will be resource impacts including staff time. It will be important to understand how best to direct staff time and other resources to support Members’ priorities and how to measure progress against them. Further work will be done this year to identify the support needed and alignment with the resources supporting the Council’s Corporate Plan.

Designation: Head of Policy and Reform

Date: 3 August 2018

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Appendix 1 - A Voice for Sutherland and its People – Priorities for Sutherland County Committee

Immediate priorities for next 12 months

- Housing Development
- NC500 – promotion, impact on Council services
- Balanced / equitable HC capital investment
- UHI/NHC/schools – equality of access to courses
- Community engagement in budgeting decisions

A Voice for Sutherland and its People	<i>Mapped to “Local Voices - Highland Choices”/ Corporate Plan and/or Partners</i>
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	<i>5.6 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</i>
• Respond timeously and effectively to community organisations’ participation requests	<i>5.1 Accelerate work to bring decision-making to local areas</i>
• Actively ensure communities are consulted on proposals to change Council services	<i>5.1 Accelerate work to bring decision-making to local areas</i>
• 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	<i>5.1 Accelerate work to bring decision-making to local areas</i>
• Support Sutherland and its communities to make the most of community benefit	<i>Communities and windfarm developers</i>
2) ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	
• Encourage population growth through inward migration and work with partners to develop measures to discourage outward migration	<i>4.1 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</i>
• Encourage and expand employment opportunities through all forms of economic activity and business development throughout Sutherland	<i>4.2 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</i>
• Ensure that Highland Council jobs stay in Sutherland and even increase through relocation of services.	<i>4.2 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</i>
• Support & promote communities on the NC500 and other tourist routes in developing facilities for tourists and local people alike.	<i>4.3 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</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p><i>4.3 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</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploit opportunities to develop commercial and marine activities in harbours for the benefit of local economies. 	<p><i>3.5 Promote and support Highland businesses from all sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, forestry and aquaculture as well as newer technology-driven businesses.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote procurement of goods and services within Sutherland wherever possible and encourage other agencies to do the same 	<p><i>(3.5) (Promote and support Highland businesses from all sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, forestry and aquaculture as well as newer technology-driven businesses).</i></p>
<p>3) INFRASTRUCTURE AND CONNECTIVITY</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p><i>3.1 Urgently seek new and better ways to ensure superfast broadband and digital services are provided to all communities across the Highlands</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby OFCOM and providers for urgent and extensive improvement to the mobile phone network 	<p><i>3.1 Urgently seek new and better ways to ensure superfast broadband and digital services are provided to all communities across the Highlands</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to improve the free flow of traffic on single track roads in Sutherland by increasing size of passing places and road widening 	<p><i>3.6 With Government, HITRANS, SUSTRANS and others, deliver improvements to our key transport links</i></p> <p><i>4.3 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</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with HITRANS and forestry operators to transfer timber movement to road to rail in order to protect vulnerable peat roads from collapse 	<p><i>3.5 Promote and support Highland businesses from all sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, forestry and aquaculture as well as newer technology-driven businesses</i></p> <p><i>3.6 With Government, HITRANS, SUSTRANS and others, deliver improvements to our key transport links</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the importance of Community Transport in fragile areas by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lobbying to secure long-term funding for Community Transport operators - Removing cost from community transport groups by continuing to support ticketing operations 	<p><i>3.7 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</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. 	<p><i>3.6 With Government, HITRANS, SUSTRANS and others, deliver improvements to our key transport links</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to ensure Sutherland receives fair share of capital investment 	<p><i>Members to lobby for inclusion in refreshed Council Programme</i></p>

4) EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure and support development for School Heads and UHI/NHC in a coordinated plan for delivering distance learning and vocational training 	<i>2.6 Promote the wider use of technology and blended teaching approaches to support the way our children and young people learn</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on business/economy sectors where Sutherland has specific identifiable needs 	<p><i>2.2 Grow and retain our own skilled workforce in the Highlands; making it an exceptional place to come and study, and to remain to work</i></p> <p><i>3.5 Promote and support Highland businesses from all sectors including traditional sectors like agriculture, forestry and aquaculture as well as newer technology-driven businesses.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Partnership working to foster perception that Care & Hospitality sectors offer careers in their own right 	Sutherland Community Partnership (SCP)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage “growing our own” and retaining our young people in well paid and respected careers 	<i>2.2 Grow and retain our own skilled workforce in the Highlands; making it an exceptional place to come and study, and to remain to work</i>
5) CARE AND WELLBEING	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with Partners to develop and address health & equalities through Partnership working to improve access to Care & Respite throughout Sutherland 	<p><i>3.8 Work with NHS Highland and others to grow and invest in community based services for adults across the Highlands.</i></p> <p>SCP NHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to work with Partners to improve and develop patient transport throughout Sutherland 	SCP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue partnership working to improve Dementia & Disability friendly environments in Sutherland 	<p><i>3.8 Work with NHS Highland and others to grow and invest in community based services for adults across the Highlands.</i></p> <p>SCP NHS</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Partners and lobby government in relation to fuel poverty throughout Sutherland 	SCP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote development of child care in Sutherland 	<i>2.3 Provide services that support all our children to have the best start in life</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing – meeting demand, affordable housing, homelessness 	<i>1.1 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</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible care services in remote areas e.g. Dentistry in north and west 	<p><i>1.3 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</i></p> <p><i>3.8 Work with NHS Highland and others to grow and invest in community based services</i></p>

	<i>for adults across the Highlands.</i>
6) LAND USE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	<p><i>5.5 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.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote sustainable Forestry Management and develop Partnership working throughout Sutherland 	<p><i>5.5 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.</i></p>