

Agenda Item	14
Report No	HC/49/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: The Highland Council

Date: 13 December 2018

Report Title: **Annual Review of The Council Programme**

Report By: The Chief Executive

1. **Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The attached **appendix** contains the draft Council Programme which has been updated for 2019/20. The changes that have been made reflect ongoing engagement with elected members across the chamber since the summer on emerging priorities; the delivery of Corporate Plan commitments as reported to Council in September 2018; and the major themes that have arisen during the November public engagement programme.
- 1.2 All of this has contributed towards the development of an overarching vision for the Council around being Ambitious for a Sustainable and Connected Highlands. This can be seen as a common thread running throughout the Programme and it is proposed this should form the basis of priorities for the organisation into the future, to help shape decisions around resourcing and underpinned by stretching performance targets.
- 1.3 Subject to the outcome of member consideration of the draft revised Programme, a new Corporate Plan will be developed to set out the actions and performance targets required for its delivery. Members will have an opportunity to influence the content of this at an all-members' seminar planned for January 2019 and the draft corporate plan will come forward for formal member approval later in the new year.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree:
 - i. The revised commitments under the six priority themes at **Appendix 1**;
 - ii. The development of the Corporate Plan with key outcomes linked to robust target setting to be submitted to Council for members' approval in the New Year;
 - iii. A two day all-member seminar to be held in January 2019.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council approved the Programme “Local Voices/Highland Choices” in October 2018 and the supporting actions and measures were contained in the Council’s Corporate Plan, approved by members that December. At the time a commitment was given to undertake an annual review with the intention of bringing an updated Programme to Council in due course.
- 3.2 The revised Programme is attached at Appendix 1. This has been shared with all Groups in the Council and revisions have been made in response to the feedback that has been received. In addition, progress against the Corporate Plan was reported to Council in September 2018 which showed that good progress had been made against 93% of the commitments (28 out of 30) suggesting there is scope for greater ambition around the priority actions for the organisation and an opportunity to expand on each of the themes. In addition, a new theme has been included in the revised Programme, entitled “A Council that Champions the Highlands”. The themes and the actions that sit under them also reflect what the public has said matters to them.
- 3.3 The six themes in the Programme are:
A Council that Champions the Highlands;
A Place to Live;
A place to Thrive;
A place to Prosper;
A Welcoming Place; and
Your Highland Council.

4. Feedback from Engagement

- 4.1 A number of common themes have begun to develop from our engagement with members, staff and the public across the Highlands which have coalesced around a number of drivers for change under an overarching vision around being ambitious for a sustainable and connected Highlands. Highland Council staff are hardworking and committed and elected members are rightly ambitious for the communities they represent; but they and the public believe the Council needs to be better at engaging meaningfully with them and delivering services that reflect local priorities. The Council also knows that challenging financial times mean that there is a need to be better at forging collaborative partnerships in the public, private and voluntary sectors to maximise the returns on the significant joint assets and resources.
- 4.2 It is clear that there is great strength in the Highlands as an entity in terms of the collective ability to influence nationally and internationally; in the uniquely positive national and international ‘brand’ which attracts visitors and new businesses into the area; and for developing strategic approaches to service delivery where genuine economies of scale can be achieved. However, for communities to be sustainable, there is a real need for local priorities and needs to be properly understood and reflected in the way that services are delivered.
- 4.3 The engagement with communities and staff who live in their communities highlighted the extensive capacity for better collaboration on ‘place based’ issues and the real ‘will’ of many partnership and community groups to want to work better together to obtain improved local outcomes. There was a real ‘call’ from communities for Highland Council to adopt a much more transparent and collaborative approach that genuinely recognises local matters and brings everyone together to realise the collective capacity that exists and which will be essential for the Highlands to achieve its true potential and

secure a sustainable future for all communities.

5. Programme Priorities

- 5.1 Each of the six themes builds on the vision for an ambitious, sustainable and connected Highlands. The new theme 'A Council that Champions the Highlands' reflects a common view expressed by members and the public about the important representational role of elected councillors and the expectation that the Council should discharge an advocacy function for the Highlands with the Scottish and UK Governments and other key stakeholders.
- 5.2 Many of the areas highlighted in this new section mirror the issues that are being consulted on in the Local Governance Review, jointly launched by the Scottish Government and CoSLA earlier this year. The Council's response to this will reflect the feedback that has been received from all groups in the Council and throughout the November public engagement exercise. Further engagement is planned before the final report is submitted at the end of January 2019.
- 5.3 This new theme also fits with the need to respond to the challenges of Brexit through the development of a regional policy for the area. This is currently being progressed through the Convention of the Highlands and Islands with the Scottish Government, our community planning partners and our neighbouring local authorities.
- 5.4 The remaining five themes largely reflect a natural development of the 2017/18 Programme. The theme headings have been adjusted in response to feedback from elected members and have been tested for their relevance and appropriateness through the recent public engagement exercise. Actions that have been completed have been replaced with new ones. Others have been retained or revised to build on activity that the earlier Programme initiated; or to acknowledge where insufficient progress has been made, as identified through the analysis of corporate plan performance measures and Council Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs).

6. Delivering the Programme

- 6.2 The Corporate Plan will need to be refreshed to reflect the changes agreed to the Council Programme. In a new approach, the Corporate Plan will also take account of the broader organisational context to include statutory and operational service delivery priorities linked to ongoing member, community and staff engagement.
- 6.3 Work is currently underway to develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) across the Council focused on performance reporting to support our budget processes and continuous improvement activity, including Council Redesign. There will be a greater focus on outcomes, target setting and looking at how the Council evidences its impact on communities and individuals, particularly around inclusion and prevention.
- 6.4 There will be an annual review of the Corporate Plan at Council to enable amendments or new measures or actions to be considered.

7. Next Steps

- 7.1 It is recommended that a 2 day all-member seminar is held in January 2019 so that all members have the opportunity to contribute to the development of performance measures for the Council. In addition, the session will be used to explore with members how the structure of the organisation may need to change to support their

delivery including political governance structures both at strategic and area level and, critically, how all of this links with the budget proposals that need to come forward to Council in February 2019. There will also be an opportunity to conclude discussions around the Council's response to the Local Governance Review, prior to submission at the end of January 2019.

8. Implications

- 8.1 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 and will feed into setting the Council's budget.
- 8.2 Legal – there are no specific legal implications arising from the Council Programme.
- 8.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – the Council Programme continues to emphasise the importance of local and community-focused service delivery and also specifically recognises the need to address issues related to poverty, rurality and inclusion.
- 8.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – the Programme includes a specific commitment to introduce a range of strategies and plans to support our commitment to sustainability.
- 8.5 Risk – there is a risk around the extent to which all of the Programme commitments can be successfully delivered 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.
- 8.6 Gaelic – the Programme includes a specific commitment to promote and support the Gaelic language and culture.

Signed:

Designation: Donna Manson, Chief Executive

Date: 1 December 2018

Author: Kate Lackie, Business Manager

Appendix 1 – to follow