

Highland Community Planning Partnership
Community Planning Board – 19 December 2018

Agenda Item	5.
Report No	CPB 15/18

Local Governance Review

Report by: Alison Clark, Acting Head of Policy

Recommendations:

The CPP Board is asked to:

- Note the discussions which have taken place since the last Board meeting on developing a proposal for the Local Governance Review
- Note the feedback from the COSLA facilitated workshop
- Discuss the key emerging themes and agree the core themes on which to develop any proposal
- Note the arrangements for agreeing a final submission to the Scottish Government

1. Background

- 1.1 The Local Governance Review is a joint review between COSLA and the Scottish Government. The focus of the review is not just on local government but on all public sector decision making. Its purpose is to review how local decisions are made and how local democracy is working with a view to local communities having a greater say about how public services in their area are run.
- 1.2 At the meeting of the Board on the 4 October 2018, it was agreed that a proposal would be developed on behalf of the CPP to submit as part of strand two of the review. This strand seeks proposals on governance, powers, accountabilities or ways of working that could improve outcomes, reduce inequalities and improve democracy locally. It was therefore suggested that this could fit well with the aim of enabling greater accountability and strengthening the structure and governance arrangements of the CPP.
- 1.3 This report provides an update on the work undertaken since the October Board meeting to develop a proposal for the CPP, the key themes emerging and the arrangements for finalising the response for submission to the Scottish Government.

2. Update since the Board

2.1 Working Group

A small working group has been established to support this work, drawn from the COG sub-group with additional representation from the Community Partnerships. Discussions in the working group have suggested that any proposal should:

- Consider the feedback received from communities during the development of the Community Empowerment Act and HOIP engagement process about what communities regard as important in decision making at a local level.
- Focus on the Community Partnership structure as the local delivery mechanism within communities across Highland.
- Use the opportunity to formalise the Partnership structure and address some of the key challenges previously raised at COG:
 - Making community planning the day job – there is not equal prioritisation of community planning work across the partnership.
 - Accountability – ensuring equal accountability for community planning activity.
 - Enabling resource allocation – partnerships report the need for resource to effectively function and take forward activity.

2.2 **Chief Officer's Group**

A discussion on the Local Governance Review took place at the COG meeting on the 9 November 2018. Feedback was provided by the Scottish Government Location Director that suggested that it was unlikely there would be additional funding available to support CPPs in taking forward proposals and also that there was a view from Government that CPPs already had appropriate authority, structures and accountability in place to operate.

Discussion followed that suggested there was still support for a CPP proposal and that it may be helpful to focus on tackling inequalities, driving economic growth and how to add value to the work of the CPP.

COG also agreed to participate in a COSLA hosted workshop to discuss emerging issues, share ideas and identify common themes as a good basis for developing any CPP proposal.

3. **COSLA Workshop – Feedback and Key Themes**

3.1 The COSLA Local Governance Workshop was held on the 4 December with participation from a range of CPP organisations:

- NHS Highland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Police Scotland
- Highland Council
- High Life Highland
- Skills Development Scotland
- SNH
- Inclusion Scotland

3.2 The session was facilitated by COSLA staff and Professor James Mitchell from Edinburgh University. The session focused on exploring what we want to achieve, the enablers and the challenges under three types of empowerment:

- Community Empowerment – enabling communities to increase control
- Functional Empowerment – creating institutions best capable of delivering services; addressing scale, partnership and integration

- Fiscal Empowerment – without appropriate fiscal empowerment the full potential of decentralisation cannot be realised

Key messages from the session were:

3.3 **Community Empowerment**

Achieve

- Local people at core of decision making, aligned to their priorities with the aim of reducing inequalities

Enablers

- Resources – financial and people, dedicated roles in CPP to drive change
- Local infrastructure
- Different levels of empowerment and opportunities for individuals and groups to be involved at a level that they require
- Sustainable rural communities – local infrastructure, strong local relationships
- Change in culture and focus for public bodies and communities
- Appropriate accountability and Governance

Challenges

- Different ‘appetites’ for empowerment
- Capacity – not all communities are able to participate equally, some communities more resilient than others therefore professional support is required
- Resources – financial and people – need to invest to enable good empowerment and participation
- Blurred accountability of organisations

3.4 **Functional Empowerment**

Achieve?

- Improved integration and cross-service working, with resource to support activity based on need and drawn from all parts of the public sector.
- Empowerment needs to be core to the strategic aims of national and local organisations as only through this will it become the day job. It needs to be built into the structure of the organisation and recognised at a national level.

Enablers

- Resources – financial and people. Dedicated posts from within organisations to provide a focus and drive activity.
- Scottish Government bodies – empowerment needs to be recognised as core activity and priority. Local grass-root activity should be informing Scottish Government activity through national organisations based locally.
- Local flexibility with strong link to place – involvement of local people addressing priorities and actions.

Challenges/Barriers

- Linking of priorities to local outcomes
- Lack of functional change impacts on staff wellbeing
- Size of institutions
- lack of dedicated budgets ring fenced for CPP activities

3.5 **Fiscal Empowerment**

Achieve?

- Sustainable funding to enable community empowerment

Enablers

- Use of capacity/assets within communities and the need to invest in these
- Challenging how funding works – getting more money into the system, being creative with other sources
- Pooling budgets
- Longer term funding cycles
- Baseline expectations of communities
- Focus on priorities – consider how current resources are allocated between partners
- Understanding of need and where resources are required

Challenges/Barriers

- Lack of long term funding cycles
- Level of requirement on communities to access funding
- Limited public sector resource

4. **Developing a Proposal**

4.1 The feedback from the workshop and the previous discussions held at the Board and COG suggest that any proposal should focus on areas which would support the CPP in delivering on its key aims of:

- Enabling local involvement by empowering communities to develop and deliver on local priorities to address inequality
- Improving partnership approaches to addressing key outcomes specifically focused on addressing inequality within communities

4.2 A number of key themes have emerged from the discussions to date. Some of these are at the Partnership's own hand, and it is for local partners to focus on where they can better come together to deliver:- building positive local partnerships and connections; changing the culture and understanding within organisations; better use of existing local resources within communities; focusing on prioritisation of need and action.

4.3 There are a number of key themes however that would require Government intervention and it is therefore recommended that any proposal focuses on those areas which would strengthen and support community planning to deliver more effectively with improved outcomes for our communities. As previously agreed, the focus for this is the existing Community Partnership structure, as the key local delivery mechanism for

working with communities. These key themes are:

- Resourcing – financial and people resource dedicated to supporting CPP activity. At present resource requirements are competing with national priorities and sustainable funding is essential. A need for Scottish Government to engage more actively at a community level about resourcing and priorities to inform the programme for Government. This would support the resourcing requirements to support empowerment locally.
- Capacity building – critical to empowering communities and enabling greater involvement but at different levels depending upon the involvement desired locally by communities. Crucial to sustaining rural communities however dedicated resource is required to support this activity.
- Fiscal flexibility – enabling CPPs to be more creative with funding opportunities, and address the structures and financial regulations that act as a constraint.
- Functional accountability – placing empowerment and community planning within the key priorities and structures of nationally accountable organisations, therefore ensuring community planning becomes a core deliverable and priority of all organisations.

4.4 It has become clear as discussions have progressed, that it is important to give sufficient time for a proposal to be drawn up. Discussions with the Scottish Government have suggested that they will accept proposals up until the end of January. Following discussion with the Chair of the Board, it was suggested that further work was required to fully develop a proposal to submit to the review and that the Board meeting should be an opportunity to discuss the emerging key themes in more detail. This would enable a final proposal to be discussed at the COG meeting on the 23 January 2019 and to be circulated to Board members for final consideration prior to submission at the end of January.

Recommendation:

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