

Agenda Item	8.
Report No	COG 04/19

Chief Officers Group – 23 January 2019

Local Governance Review – Draft Response

Report on Behalf of the COG Sub-Group

Recommendations:

The Chief Officer's Group is asked to:

- Discuss and agree the draft response to the Local Governance Review found at appendix 1.
- Note the response will be circulated to Board members for final comments, with the final response being agreed in conjunction with the CPP Board Chair.

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 role about how public services in their area are run.
- 1.2 The COG and Board have discussed the potential areas on which to respond on several occasions and members of COG participated in a COSLA run workshop in early December. The COG sub-group met in early January to discuss the response outline, based on the discussions at the Board meeting in December. The draft response can be found at appendix 1.
- 1.3 Following consideration by the COG, the response will be circulated to Board members, including Community Partnership Chairs, for final comments. The response will then be finalised in conjunction with the CPP Board Chair prior to submission to the Scottish Government by the end of January.

Recommendations:

The Chief Officer's Group is asked to:

- Discuss and agree the draft response to the Local Governance Review found at appendix 1.
- Note the response will be circulated to Board members for final comments, with the final response being agreed in conjunction with the CPP Board Chair.

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Highland Community Planning Partnership

Draft Response – Local Governance Review

The Highland Community Planning Partnership welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Local Governance Review. Since the introduction of the Community Empowerment Act, there has been a significant step change in Community Planning within Highland. The Act has drawn partner agencies together to enter a new era of Community Planning, with communities at the centre of setting the direction and priorities for moving forward.

The Highland CPP is still on a learning journey and this new way of working is not without its challenges, however the benefits of this new approach are acknowledged by all involved and the opportunities to work closer together undoubtedly clear in order to deliver improved outcomes for communities.

The Local Governance Review has provided the Partnership with an opportunity to take stock and consider the aims, objectives and ways of working currently in place. The Partnership has considered what has been achieved to date but also where further work is required. It has provided an opportunity to consider what the challenges are to progressing effectively and realising the improved outcomes for communities, but also whether these issues are things at the Partnership's own hand to resolve or whether there are key areas in which Government support would enable change.

Areas for Improvement: Partnership Action

The review process has highlighted areas that the Partnership needs to focus on but what can be progressed within the existing framework:

- ***Enhancing collaboration*** – further development and support of existing local partnership structures to improve collaboration and the use of local community resources. Recognition of the importance of focusing on the prioritisation of need and action.
- ***Cultural change*** – changing the culture and understanding within and across organisations of the importance and benefits of partnership working. Building understanding across communities of the aims and opportunities of partnership and importance of the community role within this.
- ***Building inclusivity*** – broadening understanding of the different needs and priorities across and within our communities; between urban and fragile rural and beyond geographies to communities of interest.

Partnership Achievements:

The Highland CPP has changed significantly in the last two years, in terms of structure, approach and outlook. The Partnership has embraced the principles of the Empowerment Act and set out ensuring that our structures and focus reflect the objectives and aims of the Act. This has included:

- **Shared Aims and Objectives** – the Partnership clearly recognises that there are many things that individual partners work on together, particularly with regards service delivery. It has been agreed however that the aims and objectives for the Partnership as a whole overarch this work and that these should focus on areas where only through coming together, will the objectives be achieved. The Partnership has embraced the focus on addressing inequality and on prevention and this is embedded into the aims, outcomes and priorities of the partnership both strategically and locally.
- **Public Sector Partner Commitment** – the organisation and operational responsibility for the Partnership is now shared across the five statutory public sector partners. This is reflected strategically and locally with a clear recognition that community planning cannot be driven and delivered by one partner alone. The chairing and operational resourcing of the strategic partnership is rotated across organisations and locally, the responsibility for operational management of the local partnerships is shared across the partners.
- **Structures to Support Delivery** – the Partnership has created 9 Community Partnerships across Highland to ensure that communities can be fully involved in the development and delivery of priorities for their communities. In an area as geographically diverse as Highland, locality planning could not be fully realised unless this is local to the communities directly affected.
- **Resourcing** – partnerships have attempted to embed their running and operation within existing structures and to pull existing local resources to deliver partnership priorities. External funding through Aspiring Communities has also been sourced in an attempt to bolster capacity locally.
- **Capacity Building** – the local partnerships have been creative and pro-active in working with their communities to develop locality plans that reflect the priorities of the local community. In addition, wider work has been ongoing within local partnerships areas and across Highland to build understanding and resilience in key areas of work. Some examples are included below.

Mid Ross Community Partnership

Community Conversations Facilitators Toolkit – The Mid Ross Community Partnership co-produced with practitioners and community members, a facilitators toolkit to support community engagement activities to inform the Dingwall Locality

Plan.

The purpose is to ensure better opportunities for everyone in Dingwall, making it a fairer, and an even better community to live in. The Partnership want as many people as possible to join in a 'conversation' about how to do this. The Partnership started the planning process in March when they invited people to a meeting to discuss how the Partnership could ensure the Plan takes account of the views of the local community. A key message received was 'go to where people are at'. The 'Community Conversation Toolkit' enables the many organisations and groups already meeting in Dingwall to take part when and where it suits them.

How will it work?

The 'Community Conversation' is ran in a workshop style session where a group of people who know each other already explore a topic, including what issues matter most to them and why. In this case the 'topic' is what improvements people want to see in Dingwall and how the Partnership can make it a fairer place for everyone. This Toolkit should enable anyone who wants to have a go at hosting a 'Community Conversation' to do so but the Partnership also offer to help plan and run a session if groups need support. The Toolkit provides information about the Community Partnership, gives some facts and figures about Dingwall, summarises what is already known from Partnership surveys and other consultations and provides some prompts to get discussion going. The toolkit takes everyone through the process step by step and gives hints and tips along the way.

The Partnership provided training for CLD partners on how to use the toolkit.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) – developing a community of practice

NHS Highland delivered 3 free one day training events to community planning partners and third sector organisations in April and May 2018. 50 people took part in the training which set out to:

- explore the origins of ACE
- explore and understand resilience in relation to youth work practice
- explore and understand trauma informed approaches to youth work practice

COG Note: Further examples awaited

Areas for Improvement: Government Action

The Highland CPP recognises the importance of public sector organisations operating differently in order to achieve improved shared outcomes for communities. There has been a significant change in the way in which the Partnership in Highland operates as a result of the Community Empowerment Act and strong recognition of the benefits this has brought. The Partnership also does not underestimate the significant work still required in order to improve and ensure greater collaboration in the way in which we operate. However, the Partnership firmly believes that there are a number of areas in which Government action and change in approach could support and strengthen the way in which we operate and that without this input, fully realising the aims of community empowerment and participation will be challenging.

Resourcing

It is the strong view of the Partnership that specific dedicated financial and people resource is required to support CPP activity, in order to fully achieve improved community empowerment. Whilst public sector agencies do need to work closer together in order to deliver improved outcomes using existing resources, recognition is needed that redirecting resource to supporting the operation of community planning is extremely challenging and risks taking away from front line activities. It is impossible for organisations to redirect resources in this way when competing with national priorities e.g. NHS waiting lists, number of police officers etc. Sustainable and dedicated funding is essential to deliver community planning.

A further area for development is a need for Scottish Government to engage more actively at practitioner level in order to hear and react to community voices about resourcing and priorities in order to inform the programme for Government. This would enable greater understanding of local priorities and the resourcing required to support.

Capacity building

Building capacity within communities is critical to empowering communities and enabling greater involvement. Commonly this is at different levels depending upon the involvement desired locally by communities, and the ability of communities to engage varies considerably. Capacity building is vital to inclusivity. There is a strong belief that the scale of this task has been underestimated by Government and existing resources for both the community sector and statutory agencies are not able to sustain the level of support required to enable communities to engage and be involved. The Partnership has been successful in attracting short term funding to provide a level of support however dedicated resource to support this activity is crucial to sustaining rural communities.

Fiscal flexibility

A further area of support required is enabling CPPs to be more creative with funding opportunities, and address the structures and financial regulations that act as a constraint. It would be helpful if legislation could enable the CPP to apply for funding as a collective body as, at present, this can only be done by a single organisation.

Functional accountability

The Highland CPP firmly believes in the strength of the different partners coming together, along with our community and voluntary sector, to plan together for our communities. We are therefore not supportive of a single public agency model but what we do seek is support to strengthen existing structures and enable improved collaboration. This includes 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.

There is also support for exploring an amendment to the Local Government Act to allow Councils to delegate functions to other CPP partners or community bodies and for similar powers to be given to other CPP partners. This could help strengthen shared responsibility and joint working. For example, this could potentially enable the responsibility for CLD regulation to be devolved to the CPP. In reality, delivery of CLD provision can only be done in partnership, but the regulations place the responsibility on Local Authorities.

More generally, the principle of subsidiarity should be applied to all levels and sectors and to nationally accountable organisations to enable and strengthen local decision making.

Future Proofing

This review of local governance provides an opportunity to look forward and future proof the current aims and objectives. Our communities are currently changing and to support and enable them to move forward, there must be recognition of the different supports that will be required within the future. Our urban communities do not tend to operate as communities of geography but on communities of interest or theme and there is a changing demographic across many rural communities with an aging population. This will require a different kind of support into the future to enable people to engage and be involved.

To build resilience into the empowerment agenda and to enable our communities to develop and improve, there needs to be resourcing built into this model to future proof the aims and objectives for the future.
