

Item 10 - Question Time

To the Leader of the Council

“Next month will mark the halfway point for this Council term. At the outset, Members heard of your Administration’s exciting localism plans. As we near this halfway mark, communities tell me they do not feel they have experienced the bold vision which was once set out.

Can you provide a timetable for your plans and what we can expect by the end of this term?”

Response to Mr A Jarvie

There has been a significant amount of Member and officer engagement over the past 12 months in progressing localism through the development of the Place Based Strategy, as set out at the last Council in the wider context of the Council’s Organisational Framework. The creation of a new organisational structure which places local accountability and the understanding of local needs and opportunities at the centre of the new Executive Chief Officer roles supports this.

There have been over 50 public, member and staff engagements throughout the Highlands from November 2018 to January 2019. Alongside this there have been meetings with all of the Area Committees and a number of Members Seminars focused on the Council’s Governance review and how best local committees wish to develop and involve communities in developing local priorities and committee business. It will be for each local committee to determine how it wishes to progress this depending upon their local area. A further round of engagement sessions is now underway and will continue through to the end of the year. The theme of localism has also been a key aspect of the Review of Community Councils and, based on feedback, key actions following the review include developing a shared set of principles and working practices between the Council and Community Councils and how to involve Community Councils more in the work of the Council at a local level.

A further strand in the development of localism has been engagement and consultation at a local level across the Highlands around the delivery of disaggregated budgets and opportunities to generate and invest locally raised income. Indeed, the Special EDI meeting on 24 October is a part of that process.

The Council and its partners are also leading in taking a local approach to community planning through the creation of Community Partnerships. Each partnership is responsible for developing local priorities aimed at tackling socio-economic inequality. The actions identified, set out in locality plans, are developed in conjunction with local communities and groups to ensure that partnership priorities are driven by the needs of local communities. In addition, at a strategic level, the CPP Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) also focuses on addressing

inequality and its outcomes and priorities have been developed through engagement with local communities and reflecting the needs of communities across Highland.

Every day, in every ward, local activity is taking place in communities with local member involvement. All of these things demonstrate our continued commitment and action in driving this agenda forwards.

As set out in the Organisational Transformation and Transition report also on the Council agenda today, a report on the Place Based Strategy will be coming to December Council for approval. It will also be one of the key subjects for discussion at a proposed Members seminar on 13 November.