

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Agenda Item	10
Report No	HC/38/22

Date: 27 October 2022

Report Title: The Highland Council Programme - Progress Update

Report By: Acting Depute Chief Executive

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on how the Council Programme has developed since the last progress report to Council on 22 September 2022 including draft Outcomes, Actions, and an Engagement Plan. **Appendix 1** provides the most up to date drafting of the commitments under the 4 strategic Pillars: People; Place; Economy; and Environment sorted according to 6 Strategic Outcome Statements.
- 1.2 In addition, the report describes the next steps that will be taken for public, staff and Member engagement in order to finalise the Programme, prior to this being brought to Council on 8 December 2022 for approval.
- 1.3 The Programme commitments and associated targets and measurements will be included in the Council's new Corporate Plan which will also come to Council in December for Members' consideration and approval.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Council is invited to note:
 - i. the approach and work to date in developing the Programme;
 - ii. the next steps including the ongoing programme of engagement;
 - iii. that the final Programme will come forward to Council for approval on 8 December 2022; and
 - iv. that the Corporate Plan will also come forward to Council for approval on 8 December 2022, and Directorate Service Plans will be updated thereafter, aligning outcomes with the Programme priorities.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource Implications:** There will be significant resource implications for the Council arising from the approved Council Programme because the

Programme sets the Council's strategic direction, from which the allocation of resources must follow. The Programme is aspirational and ambitious but must be affordable within available funding and the context of the current UK-wide financial crisis. Financial sustainability is recognised as a key underpinning principle and it is also included as one of the Programme's 6 Strategic Outcomes. The specific resource implications will be worked through as part of the process for developing the Corporate Plan actions and associated Service Plan requirements.

- 3.2 **Legal:** There are no specific legal implications arising from the Council Programme at this stage, however the Council has a number of statutory obligations which must continue to be funded.
- 3.3 **Risk:** There is a risk around the extent to which all of the Programme commitments can be successfully delivered over the next 5 years in the context of reducing budgets and uncertainty regarding the wider economic and political context. 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. There will also be regular reviews of the Programme over the course of the next five years to take account of changing economic and other factors.
- 3.4 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural):** Resilient Communities and addressing issues related to poverty and inequality are emerging as two of the Programme's 6 Strategic Outcomes; and Place as one of the 4 strategic pillars.
- 3.5 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever:** Accelerating the Council's actions to address the climate and ecological emergency is one of the Programme's Six Strategic Outcomes and is reflected in a number of the priority actions contained within the developing Programme. As part of the engagement programme, Climate Change Committee members will be asked to participate in a focus group to consider the Programme in the light of the Council's Climate Change and Adaptation requirements.
- 3.6 **Gaelic:** The developing Programme includes a specific commitment to promote and support Gaelic language and culture. Programme commitments will also be considered in the light of the new National Gaelic Language Plan.

4. Context

- 4.1 A number of reports to Council have set out the context in which the current Council Programme is being developed. Recovery from the pandemic and ongoing health and wellbeing issues linked to COVID 19, impacts of Brexit, the war in Ukraine, the support and resettlement of Ukrainian refugees, and the cost of living and fuel energy crisis - the wider impacts of these on both the Council and our communities in Highland will continue to be a context for consideration. These inform many of the short to medium term Programme aims and the extent to which they will need to continue into the longer term will be assessed at regular review points over the coming years.
- 4.2 Sustainability, resilience and the continued need to work with our partners are key underpinning principles arising from Member engagement and discussion to date.

5. Programme Approach

5.1 Having listened to and taken on board discussions at September Council it was decided that the Programme would come to December Council to allow more time for wider engagement. Meantime, the general content has continued to be developed and refined by the Administration to prepare it for this next stage.

5.2 The Draft Programme is split into three parts with the third part split into 6 chapters:

- Part I – this will be a high-level introductory statement from the Council's Administration explaining the approach taken to drawing up the Programme, the context and environmental influences leading to the identification of key strategic outcomes (as set out in para 4.1 above) and reflecting on the messages emerging from the programme of engagement.
- Part II – this will set out the principles underlying the Programme. In the development process, a number of principles have emerged that have underpinned the identification and delivery of the Programme priorities. These are:
 - Ambition
 - Fairness and Equality
 - Sustainability
 - Value for Money
 - Partnership and Collaboration
 - Affordable and Deliverable
 - Connectivity
- Part III – the Draft Programme currently has 6 Strategic Outcome Statements relating to: Sustainable Highland; Green Highland; Caring Highland; Resilient Communities; Housing; and Culture and Leisure. Each Outcome Statement is heading its own chapter with priority actions listed under the four strategic pillars of People; Place; Environment; and Economy. It is this final part that will be the primary focus of the engagement programme.

5.3 The draft Strategic Outcome Statements are as follows:

1. **A Resilient and Sustainable Council** – working with partners to address financial and demographic challenges with a positive approach to change.
2. **Resilient and Sustainable Communities** – working with our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of citizens.
3. **Accessible Housing for All** – delivering and enabling a housing supply which supports resilient communities and enables strong economic growth.
4. **A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre for Renewable Energy** – Accelerating our response to the climate and

ecological emergency and maximising financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.

5. **A Fair and Caring Highland** - working collaboratively to reduce inequalities of income, learning and wellbeing .
6. **Improved Quality of Life for Highland People** - improving physical and mental wellbeing by supporting and promoting access to sports, leisure, arts, and cultural services.

5.4 Each of the Outcomes have a number of Priority Actions, arranged under the 4 themes – People, Place, Economy and Environment. These priority actions have been sorted and developed from the priorities that were included in the previous report to Council in September. Duplication has been removed and synergies identified where possible and appropriate. Although some priority actions may apply across a number of headings they have been placed where they appear to be most relevant.

6. Programme Research

6.1 Previous research from the Officer Support Group included a review of Programmes and Plans across a range of UK and Scottish organisations, including councils. Through the research, the broad topics of 'People', 'Place', 'Economy' and 'Environment' emerged. It was found that the majority (12 out of 13) of the sampled councils aligned with these four broad strategic themes.

6.2 Refining the review, locally specific research data is now being incorporated to provide a Highland focused evidence base for the developing Programme including key Highland demographic and regional economic data to inform the developing Programme priorities.

6.3 Specific research sources currently being considered include the comparison of internal and external attitude and opinion surveys, where communities have responded to a range of different topics. For example, looking at tenant surveys and the recently concluded community engagement exercise 'Your Say Highland'. Further key research sources include the consideration of demographic and economic reports produced by Highland and Islands Enterprise, the most recent of which is the Ipsos MORI survey 'My Life in the Highlands and Islands'

7. Programme Engagement

7.1 In addition to reviewing existing survey data, the following engagement activity specifically relating to the emerging Draft Programme principles and priorities is also planned:

7.1.1 Internally:

- Vision boards (included in **Appendix 3**) have been distributed to Secondary schools and some Primary schools. Following the October holidays young people will be encouraged to write their hopes and aspirations for a future Highland on these posters; and

- A series of staff engagement sessions are being held over the coming weeks and as part of this, staff groups across all Services, both office and depot based, will be asked to feedback on the draft programme priorities.

7.1.2 Externally

- Focus group sessions are being planned for the business community and third sector;
- A short survey (**Appendix 2**) will be circulated to our list of around 350 community groups and community councils, to staff and Members; and made available on our website and promoted through social media.
- Strategic Chairs will visit local areas on 'walkabouts' during the first half of November.

7.1.3 Members

- A number of workshops have been held with the Joint Administration Group members.
- The Administration will arrange further cross-party engagement opportunities to discuss the emerging Programme.

7.2 Feedback from the engagement approaches combined with learning from the research set out in section 6 will be considered by the Council's Administration and reflected in all of the sections of the final draft of the Programme.

7.3 In the longer term, a circular engagement strategy will underpin future review of the Programme and development of Programme priorities and the Corporate Plan in response to the dynamic financial, economic and demographic context.

8. Plain English Requirements

8.1 The precise wording of the Programme is also still subject to refinement and change. Once the content has been adjusted in the light of the learning from research and engagement, the whole of the document will be reviewed in the light of 'Plain English' requirements. This is to ensure the use of clear and unambiguous language, avoiding the use of technical or difficult terms or anything that may be considered 'jargon'.

9. Next Steps

9.1 The Programme will continue to be refined and developed with the intention of submitting the final version to the Council meeting on 8 December 2022 for approval.

9.2 The actions required to deliver the Programme and the appropriate indicators to measure progress in the form of the draft Council Corporate Plan, will be submitted to the Highland Council in December. The draft Corporate Plan will set out the key performance indicators, actions and the timeframes proposed for delivering the commitments and outcomes in the Programme. This will then be reflected in the draft Directorate Service Plans, with final versions coming forward for approval at Strategic Committees early in 2023.

- 9.3 There will be an annual review of the Corporate Plan at Council each Autumn to assess progress and enable amendments and/or new measures and actions to be considered.
- 9.4 It is also intended that the Programme will be reviewed after two years to reflect changes in context and priorities.

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Designation: Officer Support Group

Date: 12 October 2022

Appendix 1

Administration Programme

2022-2027

Principles

Fairness and Equity

Ambition

Sustainability

Connectivity

Partnership and Collaboration

Affordable and Deliverable

Value for Money

A Resilient and Sustainable Council

Working with partners to address financial and demographic challenges with a positive approach to change

People	Place
Provide whole family support to those wanting to work within and from the Highlands.	Empower communities to find local solutions and signpost our communities to identify and lever in funding.
Grow and retain our own talent within the Council.	Work together with communities and partners to produce local plans which meet local needs.
Work with the public and private sector partners on joint workforce planning, lifelong learning and skills for future economy.	Develop place-based partnership strategies to address rural depopulation.
Economy	Environment
Support business resilience and business continuity planning (HOIL).	Continue the Council's success in attracting rural tourism infrastructure funding to provide infrastructure.
Investment in commercial opportunities to generate new income streams for the Council.	Implement the tourism levy as an enabler to a vibrant attractive visitor experience.
Support the private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland remains a top destination for inward investment.	Accelerate our Asset Management approach to increase efficiency and reduce overheads and carbon impact.

Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Working with our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of citizens

People	Place
Develop affordable and reliable public transport for sustainable rural and urban communities and mental wellbeing.	Place based plans that focus on quality neighbourhoods and direct local funding opportunities towards local priorities.
Continue to work with partners to develop and promote Road Safety and Water Safety	Support communities to help each other live well and independently
	Working with partners to sustain visitor management.
Economy	Environment
Support Scottish and UK Government Broadband initiatives to ensure maximum coverage of fibre solution across the area.	Work with communities to keep green spaces clean and safe.
Working with Scottish Government on the delivery of strategic road, ferry, and rail infrastructure throughout the Highlands.	Continue our programme of road condition and maintenance

Accessible Homes for All

Delivering and enabling a housing supply which supports resilient communities and enables strong economic growth

People	Place
Provide and enable quality, affordable and accessible homes.	Develop housing to enable our vulnerable and elderly adults to be cared for close to home and community.
Economy	Environment
Explore key worker housing opportunities, working with public and private sector partners.	Provide warm, energy efficient homes.
Link housing developments to integrated transport for access to work.	Creative use and repurposing of Council assets for housing use.

A Sustainable Highland Environment and Global Centre For Renewable Energy

Accelerating our response to the climate and ecological emergency and maximising financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.

People	Place
Delivery of active travel infrastructure.	Empower communities to find local solutions and lever funding.
Enable greener transport including low carbon public transport and the development of hydrogen hubs throughout the area.	Increase amount of land and seas being well managed for nature and Adaptation including rewilding – blue economy, carbon sequestration, and peatland restoration.
Economy	Environment
Invest in commercial renewable energy opportunities to generate new income streams for the Council.	Achieve our Net Zero Targets.
Support the private sector and public sector economic development partners in ensuring that Highland remains a top destination for inward investment.	Focus and harness our areas of immense natural capital to deliver alternative energy solutions including development of solar, hydrogen, Hydro, and wind solutions.
Identify and commit to renewable energy investments to reduce the overall energy costs for the council.	Reduce residual waste and increase recycling.

A Fair and Caring Highland

Working collaboratively to reduce inequalities of income, learning and wellbeing.

People	Place
Improved outcomes including; attainment, achievement, positive destinations for all children and young people with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy and our most vulnerable learners.	Promote fair access through integrated and co-located services.
Tackle child poverty and access to welfare support	Improve mental health and wellbeing through improving access to housing, transport, and jobs.
Sustain high performance in securing positive destinations including Modern Apprenticeships and inclusive careers for the most vulnerable.	Work with partners to develop and deliver a community wealth building strategy.
Work with partners on suicide prevention.	
Economy	Environment
Support a strong inclusive economy by supporting diverse growth sectors.	Develop whole family community hubs to ensure early intervention is available.
Help our Highland communities get online and tackle digital exclusion.	Promote Just Transition by maximising the social and economic opportunities of climate action, while minimising and carefully managing any challenges

Improved Quality of Life for Highland People

Improving physical and mental wellbeing by supporting and promoting access to community learning, cultural, sports, and leisure services

People	Place
Promote a diverse range of traditional, existing and emerging sporting and cultural activities.	Working together through Community Learning and Development to improve the levels of mental health and wellbeing experienced by people in our communities.
	Help to create vibrant creative, sustainable communities developing on social capital and lifelong education for all
Economy	Environment
Promote the Gaelic language and cultural development	Promote Highland's natural environment for sport, leisure and wellbeing
Ensure strategic sports and cultural planning across the Highlands.	



The Council under its new Administration is developing a Programme of key priorities for the next 5 years 'Our Future Highland'. We would like communities to help shape the Programme by contributing your views, values, and ideas of how the Highlands could look and feel by 2027.

We really appreciate your support in contributing to this part of the engagement process and ask that you complete the survey by XXXX

Please email ourfuture@highland.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

CLlr Raymond Bremner, Council Leader

CLlr Bill Lobban, Council Convener

We need your advice!

Write on the board how your dream Highland would look in 2027.

Tha feum againn air do chomhairte!

Sgrìobh air a' bhòrd mar a bhiodh a' Ghàidhealtachd a bu mhiann leat a' coimhead ann an 2027.

Our Future Highland

We would like communities to help shape 'Our Future Highland' by contributing their values, views, ideas, and dreams of how they think Highland could look and feel like by 2027.

1.a) It is proposed that the following principles would guide what we do as an organisation. To what extent do you agree or disagree with these?

Statement	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
Fairness and Equity	
Sustainability	
Partnership and collaboration	
Value for money	
Ambition	
Connectivity	
Affordable and deliverable	

1.b) Are there other principles that you think the Council should have to guide its work?

The following statements set out our key ambitions for Highland – what we hope Highland could look and feel like by 2027. We want you hear from you to what extent you agree or disagree that these should be our ambitions for Highland.

2.a) To what extent do you agree with each of the following statements as ambitions for Highland by 2027:

Statement	Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
<p>A resilient and sustainable Council – Working together to address financial and demographic challenges with a positive approach to change</p>	
<p>Resilient and sustainable Communities – working with our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of citizens</p>	
<p>Accessible housing for all – delivering and enabling a housing supply which supports resilient communities and enables strong economic growth</p>	
<p>A sustainable Highland environment which is a global centre of renewable energy – Accelerating our response to the climate and ecological emergency and maximising the financial and environmental opportunities arising from the huge renewable energy potential in the Highlands.</p>	
<p>A Fair and Caring Highland - working collaboratively to reduce inequalities of income, learning and wellbeing.</p>	
<p>Improved Quality of Life for Highland People - improving physical and mental wellbeing by supporting and promoting access to sports, leisure, arts, and cultural services</p>	

2.b) Are there other hopes you would have for your community that aren't reflected here?

3. We want to work with our communities, businesses and our partner agencies to help create a stronger, sustainable and fairer Highland community. To help us shape our vision and our priorities, please tell us what is important to you, your family and your community.

What are the things that will improve life:

For you
For your family
For your community

+ Demographics

Gender

Age

Place

Disability

Etc.

Appendix 3



We need your advice!
Write on the board how your dream Highland would look in 2027.
Tha feum againn air do chomhairle!
Sgrìobh air a' bhòrd mar a bhiodh a' Ghàidhealtachd a bu mhiann leat a' coimhead ann an 2027.