The Highland Council	Agenda Item	**7**
Community Services Committee **28 April 2016**	Report No	COM 16/16

Roads Collaboration Programme - Update

Report by Director of Community Services

Summary
This report provides an update on the ongoing development of the Northern Roads Collaboration Forum. Members are asked to note the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Forum including the election of its first Chair and Vice-Chair.

1. Introduction

1.1. Developing formal collaborative practices in road services strongly aligns with the Scottish Government's shared services agenda.

1.2. The Roads Collaboration Programme and the formation of the Northern Roads Collaboration Forum of Councillors were reported to the 20 August 2015 meeting of this Committee (COM 47/15 – Item 19).

1.3. Councillors Allan Henderson and Richard Greene were nominated to represent The Highland Council's interests on the Forum.

1.4. The Roads Collaboration Programme is facilitated by the Improvement Service and has a Board drawn from COSLA and SCOTS (Society of Chief Officers of Transportation in Scotland).

2. Forum Meetings

2.1. The Forum has met twice since August 2015. The first meeting explored the concepts behind the Collaboration Programme and agreed some priorities for reports from Officers for the second meeting which took place on 3 March 2016 hosted by the Highland Council in Headquarters. The draft minute is attached in **Appendix 1** to this report.

2.2. The Forum received an update on national Roads Collaboration activity and discussed the role/remit of the Forum, and the content of a proposed Minute of Agreement. These will be approved by the individual Councils before ratification at a future meeting of the Forum.

2.3. Reports on initial cases for sharing and collaboration were presented, discussed, and actions agreed as reproduced in paragraph 2.4. The subject areas discussed are:

      a.   Sharing of Frontline Resources
      b.   Training/Health & Safety
      c.   Signage
      d.   Harbours & Dredging

2.4.   Actions agreed by the Forum:

- MoA to be developed and circulated by Aberdeenshire Legal (and other legal officers);
- officers to share details of individual Council/Committee lead-in times with RCP team/Ewan Wallace to arrange next meetings;
- officers to continue with initiative development as indicated in this note, and provide updates at the next meeting;
- next Forum meeting to be set up in June by RCP team; and
- contact to be made with UHI.

2.5.   Cllr Allan Henderson has been elected Forum Chairman, and Cllr David Aitchison of Aberdeenshire Council elected as Vice Chairman.

3.   Implications

3.1.   This report has no impact on equality, Gaelic, Climate Change/Carbon Clever or rural considerations, nor are there any resource, legal or risk implications arising from the recommendations.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note:

- that Cllr Allan Henderson has been elected as the first Chair of the Northern Roads Collaboration Forum and that Cllr David Aitchison of Aberdeenshire Council is elected as Vice Chair; and

- the minute of the 2nd meeting of the Forum on 3 March in **Appendix 1** and in particular the actions agreed and reproduced in paragraph 2.4 of this report.

Designation:	Director of Community Services
Date:	13 April 2016
Author:	Richard Evans, Head of Roads and Transport
Background Papers:	Roads Collaboration Programme - Governance First (COM 47/15 – Item 19) - 20 August 2015

Northern Roads Collaboration Forum

Thursday 3rd March, 1100, The Highland Council HQ, Inverness

Attending

Cllr Ross Grant, Richard Blain, Mike Cheyne, Aberdeen City Council; Cllr David Aitchison, Cllr Graeme Clark, Geraldine Fraser, Philip McKay, Ewan Wallace, Aberdeenshire Council; Cllr Jeanette Geddes, Douglas Hill, Angus Council; Cllr Ellen Morton, Jim Smith, Argyll & Bute Council; Cllr John Mackay, Donald Macrae, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar; Cllr Richard Greene, Cllr Allan Henderson, Cllr Hugh Morrison, Richard Evans, Robin Pope, Highland Council; Cllr John Cowe, Cllr Gordon Cowie, Stephen Cooper, Bill Ross, Moray Council; Angus Bodie, Kirsty Duerden, Roads Collaboration Programme

Apologies

Cllr Ramsay Milne, Aberdeen City Council; Iain MacKinnon, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

1.   **Welcome & Introductions**

Ewan Wallace (Chair of the officer group) welcomed the Elected Members and officers to the second Forum meeting, describing the purpose of the meeting being to discuss Forum arrangements and to discuss progress with collaborative initiative development. He thanked Highland Council for hosting the meeting.

2.   **Update from Officer Group**

Ewan Wallace updated the members on the progress made by the officer group, who have met regularly via teleconference over the past few months to develop 4 initial areas for collaboration. These will be covered later in the agenda.

It was noted that the Forum now has full membership from the 8 councils. Members questioned Shetland's involvement in the group. It was confirmed that in 2015 Shetland Islands Council took the decision not to be part of any governance arrangement at this time, but are kept informed of the progress the group makes.

The Roads Collaboration Programme team continue to support the officer group.

3.   Roads Collaboration Programme Update

Angus Bodie presented an update on the national Road Collaboration Programme (RCP). This covered the Programme's background and an introduction to the portfolio of projects delivered by the Programme, most notably the Governance First project which focuses on creating flexible arrangements for collaboration and sharing to ensure efficiencies and resilience. Under this project, there are now 4 regional cluster groups meeting across the country.

The presentation also provided an introduction to the RCP's workforce review project. A recent data capture has been undertaken to gather information on the workforce demographics and the areas of skill shortage. The data has been analysed on a regional group basis, and the following early findings have emerged for the Northern area:

- There is an ageing workforce, with over 78% of the workforce over 40
- There are significant gaps in terms of graduate and trainee workforce, with no Modern Apprentices and only 11 Graduates employed in the Forum area
- There are professional skill concerns for the future in areas such as design, maintenance, structures and asset management
- There are operational skill concerns for the future in areas such as winter, safety fencing, fleet maintenance, traffic management, pothole patching, kerbing, depot security & stores, roads surfacing, drainage works and emergency response.

The next steps include using the data to form a draft workforce demographics report and skills/qualifications gap analysis, and a workforce resilience workshop at the roads event is being held. The work is being driven by a steering group with representation from SCOTS, Transport Scotland, CITB, Skills Development Scotland and the Improvement Service.

4.   Forum Arrangements

a.   Role/Remit of Forum

Members and officers discussed the role of the Forum. It was agreed that the Forum was in place to provide leadership and governance to formalise and make sharing transparent, both now in the future. It is about providing leadership and direction for collaborative activity, and ensuring a better environment for officers to be flexible and innovative by providing transparency around sharing.

Members questioned if the use of other models had been explored and considered. In particular, it was highlighted that RTPs are existing statutory bodies that could take on the role of a governing body for collaboration. Members were assured that an RTP, amongst other options, were fully considered by the officer group and the Joint Committee model was selected as the one most likely to meet the needs of the partner councils. It was noted that there will be opportunities for RTPs and other organisations to be involved in Forum arrangements in the future.

b. **Lead/Chair**

Councillor Allan Henderson from Highland Council was nominated as Chair of the Forum and this was approved. Councillor David Aitchison from Aberdeenshire Council was nominated as Vice Chair and this was approved.

Support to Forum

Aberdeenshire Council are to continue to chair the officer group for a 12 month minimum period. The Legal team at Aberdeenshire Council have been drafting the MoA document to be covered later in the agenda. The Roads Collaboration Programme team, hosted by the Improvement Service, will continue to provide business support where required.

c. Role of Officers Group

It was agreed that the officer group will continue to derive and develop collaborative initiatives and Elected Members will provide challenge and direction to officers. For all initiatives, officers will monitor success in terms of impact and savings in the future with particular focus on resilience and sustainability.

d. Drafting of Minute of Agreement

An initial draft MoA had been circulated for comment prior to the last meeting. Aberdeenshire are now modifying this and will be circulating. The MoA covers information such as:

- Number of Members and Quorum
- Inviting other parties to attend, e.g. RTPs, Transport Scotland, etc.
- Appointments - suggested 1 year period
- Number of meetings per year – suggested maximum of 4 meetings
- Use of technology, e.g. teleconferencing and videoconferencing
- Timing of papers
- Confirmation of areas of work
- Potential for role of sub-committees and links to other existing partnership bodies
- Committee support/Lead authority
- Expected costs

It was agreed that officers will check council lead-in times to determine a timescale for bringing MoA to respective Committees/Council meetings. Geraldine Fraser will liaise with SOLAR colleagues in the preparation of final document.

5. Initiative Development Updates

The lead officers from the 4 initial areas for collaboration presented initial cases for sharing to Members:

a.   Sharing of Frontline Resources

Bill Ross presented an initial proposal illustrating the direction of travel on the sharing of frontline resources. It highlighted how developing an internal market would allow councils to share resources to better afford specialisms. This is already done to some extent, but the Joint Committee would overcome any procurement issues. Each sharing arrangement would be formalised through partnership agreement or service level agreement. It was highlighted that any sharing would be around cost and not to create profit.

It was noted that this initiative could evolve to include professional services. The paper will be developed further with specific activities for collaboration considered through a SWOT analysis, secondary scoring matrix and benefit realisation exercise.

Members questioned whether individual councils would need to justify taking part in some areas of collaboration but not others, highlighting concerns around reporting to Audit Scotland, particularly from an island perspective. It was agreed that participants/reasons for opting out should be recorded at the development stage and any business case will explicitly state who a piece of work will involve.

b.   Training/Health & Safety

Mike Cheyne presented an initial proposal on the sharing of training/health & safety resources.

It was noted that all councils are paying for the same or similar training. It is proposed that the partner councils agree what training/health & safety is required and consider options for collaborative delivery. It is proposed there will be an effective training programme that all councils can buy into as necessary. This could be an opportunity to develop and secure in-house resources.

It was agreed that the next step is for the lead officer to gather information from each council on:

- What training is currently delivered – both external and in-house
- Delivery method
- Cost
- What further training is required

Members agreed that there was considerable need for developing the future workforce, and that diversity in approach was needed, particularly using distance learning and ICT opportunities. The alignment to the national workforce review was highlighted and that the Forum will be able to consider workforce issues as an individual workstream.

Contact is to be made with University of Highlands and Islands.

c.   Signage

Philip McKay presented an initial proposal to expand the use of Aberdeenshire Council's signage manufacturing facilities. There is currently the potential to take additional work on. Currently, some work is done for other councils on an ad hoc basis, but this is faced with procurement issues.

The proposal is to develop a Service Level Agreement to allow partner councils to initially use the spare capacity but also in time to invest in possible expansion of the signage facilities. This would have benefits in terms of workforce resilience, economies of scale, security of employment etc. There is also the potential for other contractors such as BEAR to use this facility.

Costs would be recovered through overheads shared and signs charged 'at cost'. Officers will work this through to a detailed proposal.

There is scope to provide modern apprenticeship training if turnover can be increased, alongside the development of in-house sign design expertise.

It was agreed that officers will gather likely future sign requirements and map this against capacity.

Members seek assurance that this collaboration will provide best value, and reflect geographical differences across the area. It was agreed that each council would need to compare proposed costs against those of the private sector.

d.   Harbours & Dredging

Jim Smith presented an initial proposal for the sharing of knowledge and expertise in ports/harbours and marine operations. He outlined 5 specific areas where there is scope for sharing resources and expertise to strengthen resilience:

- Port Marine Safety Code
- Infrastructure Inspection & Design
- Designated Person
- Fees & Charges
- Physical Works including Dredging

It is proposed that collaboration could improve efficiencies and operational delivery in these areas.

Members sought caution around the regularising of fees and charges as this may not be beneficial to all partners. There may also be variations in Harbour Acts and regulations. The status of Trust and Council harbours will be considered.

Members noted that there will be different scales of operation, highlighting Orkney and Shetland as potential centres of excellence in these areas.

Members discussed the potential for the sharing of Moray Council's dredging unit currently being built. It was discussed that there could be an annual programme developed at cost for partners with priority over the public sector. Members discussed that the benefit is not always getting the lowest price but could also be supporting the business ventures of partners.

6.   Other Opportunities for Collaboration

Through discussions within the officer group, and as highlighted through the workforce review data collection, further opportunities for collaboration have been identified as:

- Parking (back office)
- Geotechnical design
- Traffic signal maintenance contracts
- Road safety/casualty reduction
- Joint procurement at 'regional level' (working with Excel?)
- Strategic transport modelling/active travel (link to RTPs)
- Passenger transport
- Vehicle maintenance, replacement, and carbon friendly
- Trunk roads – existing/future contracts

7.   AOB & Date of Next Meeting

8.

The Chair encouraged networking amongst the Forum members. It was suggested that information surrounding corporate savings and efficiency measures could be gathered but would be anonymised.

It was agreed that dates for at least the next two meetings should be placed in diaries as soon as possible. The next Forum meeting will be in June and suggestions for a venue are welcomed. There will be another in September.

ACTIONS

- **MoA to be developed and circulated by Aberdeenshire Legal (and other legal officers)**
- **Officers to share details of individual Council/Committee lead-in times with RCP team/Ewan Wallace to arrange next meetings**
- **Officers to continue with initiative development as indicated in this note, and provide updates at the next meeting**
- **Next Forum meeting to be set up in June by RCP team**
- **Contact to be made with UHI**