

Agenda Item	13
Report No	HC/7/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Date:** 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019

**Report Title:** Governance Review – Feedback from Members’ Seminar and Next Steps

**Report By:** The Chief Executive

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1** In January 2019 there was a 2 day seminar for all Members. The purpose, on Day 1, was to consider opportunities for “Improving our Governance to achieve an ambitious, sustainable and connected future for the Highlands”. The following report provides the detailed feedback from those member workshops and seeks Members’ support for the work of the Governance Review Steering Group.
- 1.2** **Appendix 1** sets out the draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group; **Appendix 2** proposes a draft work plan; **Appendix 3** provides the detailed feedback from the members’ workshops.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1** Members are asked to agree:
- i. The Draft Terms of Reference for the Members’ Governance Review Steering Group;
  - ii. The Draft Work Plan;
  - iii. That a Members’ seminar should take place in May 2019 to consider emerging findings from the Steering Group;
  - iv. Draft proposals to be submitted to Council in June 2019 for Members’ approval.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 In December 2018 The Council agreed that there should be a 2 day all-Member seminar early in 2019 to explore with Members how the structure of the organisation may need to change, including political governance structures at both a strategic and area level, to support the delivery of the Council's budget and new performance measures arising from the Council Programme, Local Voices, Highland Choices.
- 3.2 The purpose on Day 1 was to consider opportunities for "Improving our Governance to achieve an ambitious, sustainable and connected future for the Highlands". This was split into a series of workshops, with the first part focused on the remit, purpose and operation of Strategic and Local committees; and opportunities challenges around greater community engagement.
- 3.3 Initial feedback from the first two sessions was written up and provided the following day to give Members an opportunity to indicate which specific points arising from the workshops had greatest support. This is attached at Appendix 3, re-ordered to reflect members' preferences, starting with the most popular. This reflects widespread consensus amongst Members that there are a range of issues to address and there is scope to make improvements at both a strategic and a local level.
- 3.4 At the conclusion of the seminar it was agreed to establish a cross-party Governance Review Steering Group to take this work forward. This has now met on 2 occasions, on 6 February and 20 February 2019 to draw up a draft Terms of Reference and workplan for Council approval.

### **4. Governance Review Steering Group Terms of Reference**

- 4.1 The draft Terms of Reference is attached at **Appendix 1**. This sets out the purpose, remit, working methods, membership and duration of the Steering Group.
- 4.2 The purpose of the Group is "To review the current arrangements for managing the business of the Council and to present options for improvement to the Council for approval in June 2019 for implementation from August 2019". The desired outcome will provide democratic structures that enable Members to discharge their scrutiny role in terms of council strategy, policy, and finances; oversee and monitor performance and improvement; and make well informed decisions at the most appropriate level of the organisation. This includes an up-front commitment to review the membership and enhance the roles and responsibilities of local committees.
- 4.3 To do this, members should be supported in their roles by a refreshed programme of training and development, and associated service and staffing arrangements need to be in place to reflect and support the new

arrangements.

- 4.4 Any proposed changes will need to be assessed in terms of the benefits and improvement they would deliver compared with the current arrangements; and be sustainable in terms of their impact on council resources and capacity.
- 4.5 The remit reflects the issues and themes arising from the Members' seminar. It is split into three headings: Democratic Structures/Scheme of Delegation; supporting Members; and resourcing implications.
- 4.6 The standing membership of the Steering Group includes each of the Group Leaders plus the Strategic Committee Chairs and is Chaired by the Council Convener. Local committee members will also be asked to contribute to the Review as part of the Group's consideration of local committee structures and remits. The intention is to take emerging findings to an all-Member seminar in May prior to finalising recommendations for Council to consider and approve in June 2019. It is also recommended that the Steering Group undertakes a review of the implementation and operation of new arrangements after 6 months. The review findings will be reported to Council, at which point the Steering Group will cease.

## 5. Workplan

- 5.1 The draft work plan is attached at **Appendix 2**. This proposes a largely sequential approach to the review, beginning with the Council before looking at Strategic Committees and then on to Local Committees. It is recognised that it may be necessary to revisit earlier aspects of the review as emerging proposals impact on what has gone before – particularly with regard to the inter-relationships between local and strategic business. This is entirely appropriate and will also help to address one of the common themes arising from the workshops about the need to identify and eliminate duplication between local and strategic committees. These interdependencies also mean that Review recommendations should not come forward incrementally because of the likelihood that they will have consequential impact on other parts of the governance arrangements.
- 5.2 Whilst the Review Group's recommendations will be much more robust as a consequence of this approach, one of the risks is that it may slow down the review process. Consequently a challenging timetable has been put in place to try to counter this and maintain pace and momentum. Whilst this review is too important to rush, there is also little to gain from undue caution, especially as the new governance arrangements need to be in place to support the financial and organisational transformation taking place in the Council, as outlined in earlier papers on the Council agenda. It is also recognised that there was widespread Member support for a review of the geography and membership of area committees, so it is very important to the Steering Group that it reaches this part of the workplan without undue delay.

## 6. Next Steps

6.1 Subject to Member approval, the Steering Group will meet to commence implementation of its work plan on 20 March 2019; initial proposals will come forward to a Members' seminar towards the end of May 2019 and formal recommendations to Council in June 2019.

## **7. Implications**

7.1 Resources: Any changes to the current arrangements have the potential to impact on the cost of supporting the Council's democratic structures and have knock on impacts for staff capacity in terms of servicing the committees, providing reports and attending meetings. Consequently, resourcing and capacity is a specific work stream under the Review and any proposals will be costed prior to being brought forward to Council as formal recommendations.

7.2 Legal: The Review recommendations will ensure compliance with existing legislation under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island): The review is likely to identify opportunities to improve community engagement and involvement in the democratic processes of the Council.

7.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: There are no implications arising from the Review.

7.5 Risk: There are risks attached to the Review and these include:

- Delivering to the timescales set out in the work plan will be a challenge and there is a risk around maintaining the right pace to meet the deadlines;
- Proposals will need to be financially sustainable and there is a risk that new arrangements will come at a higher cost.
- impact on staff: providing enhanced to support a revised committee structure at strategic and local level could impact on staff capacity.

All of these risks would be kept under review and mitigating actions put in place where needed.

7.6 Gaelic: There are no implications for Gaelic arising from this report.

**Author: Kate Lackie, 27 February 2019**

## GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP

**“Improving our Governance to achieve an ambitious, sustainable and connected future for the Highlands”**

### Terms of Reference

#### Purpose

To Review the current arrangements for managing the business of the Council and to present options for improvement to the Council for approval in June 2019 for implementation from August 2019.

#### Remit

1. Democratic Structures/Scheme of Delegation
  - a. Role and remit of full Council
  - b. Role, remits, membership frequency and size of Strategic Committees
  - c. Role, remits, frequency and size of Regulatory Committees
  - d. Role, remits, size, geography and frequency of Local Committees
  - e. Role of scrutiny in Local and Strategic Committees (incl Audit and Scrutiny Committee)
  - f. Role of Sub Committees, Policy Development Groups and Working Groups
  - g. Conduct of Council and Committee Business – i.e. Motions, Questions, presentations, etc
  - h. Identification and removal of duplication
  - i. How to involve/engage partners, communities and wider stakeholder groups in Council Business
2. Supporting members
  - a. Review report styles, volumes and workload more generally
  - b. Training and development requirements
3. Resourcing and Capacity Implications
  - a. Financial
  - b. Staffing
  - c. Organisational

#### Working Methods

1. Fortnightly Steering Group meetings. Dates to be set in advance
2. Additional attendees to be invited as appropriate/according to the issue being discussed
3. Review of arrangements elsewhere to compare/benchmark/identify best practice

4. Identifying and engaging with local committee members, service managers and other key stakeholders at a strategic and local level – as work develops

### Membership

Membership is fixed (no substitutes)

Chair: The Convener

4 X Strategic Committee Chairs

1 X Rep from each Group

Secretariat/Officer support: Kate Lackie and Stewart Fraser and ad hoc as required by the business of the Group

Membership:

Cllr Lobban, Cllr Mackinnon, Cllr Finlayson, Cllr Henderson, Cllr Mackenzie;  
Cllr Christie, Cllr Gray, Cllr Smith, Cllr Jarvie

### Duration

Progress of the Steering Group will be presented to Council on an ongoing basis; the first report to March Council will be to agree the terms of reference and remit of the group.

The Steering Group will remain in place during the development and implementation phase; and

The Group will then go into abeyance until the commencement of a review of the implementation and operation of new arrangements after 6 months. The review findings will be reported to Council, at which point the Steering Group will cease.

## GOVERNANCE REVIEW STEERING GROUP

## OUTLINE WORKPLAN

Timetable	Workstreams	Information Available (further research will be undertaken as required)
	<b>DEMOCRATIC STRUCTURES/ SCHEME OF DELEGATION</b>	
20/2/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Approve Terms of Reference and outline work plan for Council</li> <li>- Consider Options re Democratic Structures - Cabinet V Committee</li> </ul>	Comparison with other Councils feedback from members' seminar
05/03/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review available research and information and commission further work as required.</li> <li>- consider key internal and external stakeholder groups and process &amp; timescales for engagement and communications</li> <li>- Consider current Scheme of Delegation</li> </ul>	Scheme of Delegation Research briefings
7/03/19	Full Council – seek approval for ToR and work plan	Council report plus appendices
19/03/19	<p><b>Council Meetings</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Purpose – agree a purpose statement</li> <li>- Remit – what should come that currently doesn't; what should cease coming to Council and be delegated to Strategic or area level</li> <li>- Role of member scrutiny</li> <li>- Forward planning/agenda development/requesting items for future business</li> <li>- Conduct – Motions, Questions, presentations, requesting reports</li> <li>- Role of sub groups, Policy Development Groups seminars and briefings</li> </ul>	Scheme of Delegation Feedback from members' seminar Examples of recent agendas
19/03/19 – 16/04/19	<p><b>Strategic Committees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revised structures/remits:</li> <li>- EDI Committee</li> <li>- Care and Learning Committee</li> <li>- Corporate Resources Committee</li> <li>- Audit and Scrutiny Committee</li> <li>- Balance of strategic planning, scrutiny and operations</li> <li>- Areas to devolve to local level, areas to push to Council</li> <li>- Role of member scrutiny</li> <li>- Conduct – Meeting style, Motions, Questions and presentations</li> </ul>	Scheme of Delegation Feedback from members' seminar Feedback from Audit and Scrutiny Questionnaire and Review Examples of recent agendas Analysis of reports for decision versus reports for noting

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Role of Sub Committees, Policy Development Groups, Working Groups and briefings</li> <li>- Forward planning/agenda development/requesting items for future business</li> <li>- Frequency</li> <li>- Membership</li> <li>- Resourcing</li> </ul>	
16/04/19 - 30/05/19	<p><b>Local Committees</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remits – current and proposed</li> <li>- Geographies</li> <li>- Forward planning/agenda development</li> <li>- Frequency</li> <li>- Conduct – Motions, Questions and presentations</li> <li>- Membership – including involving communities, partners and third sector</li> </ul>	<p>Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>Review work undertaken last year</p> <p>Feedback from members’ seminar</p> <p>Feedback from Community Councils’ seminar</p> <p>Examples of recent Agendas</p>
14/05/19	<p>Regulatory Committees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequency</li> <li>- Remits – options for improved local and strategic oversight</li> <li>- Forward planning/agenda development</li> <li>- Geographies</li> </ul>	<p>Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>Feedback from members’ seminar</p> <p>Examples of recent Agendas</p>
<b>SUPPORTING MEMBERS</b>		
28/05/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review report styles, volumes and workload generally</li> <li>- Consider technology and systems for supporting Members</li> <li>- Training and Development requirements</li> </ul>	<p>Feedback from Members’ Seminar</p> <p>Feedback from Members Questionnaire, May 2018</p>
28/05/19	<p>Agree emerging proposals and arrangements for All-Members’ seminar</p>	
<b>RESOURCES</b>		
ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Financial</li> <li>- Staffing</li> <li>- Organisational</li> <li>-</li> </ul>	
27/06/19	<b>Report to Council</b>	



**WORKSHOP 1 STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE**

**Q1. Effective Decisions and Scrutiny: What level is best for effective scrutiny and decision making? What helps and what hinders effective decision making? How often should strategic committees meet? Should there be more scope for public involvement in Council business – delegations, questions**

1. Committee remits are too wide. Smaller committees will lead to a better understanding and knowledge – ability to focus attention to the effort and detailed work put into preparing reports which often do not get the attention and recognition that they deserve
2. Meetings are too long, committees have too many reports and the papers are too long. This means there is an overwhelming amount of material which leads to reduced scrutiny. Shorter reports needed, by exception, limit officer verbal introductions, need better exec summaries
3. Need smaller numbers of Councillors in strategic committees but with more focussed remit – feeling that we have just amalgamated key areas of business that dilute the opportunity for full debate and scrutiny (e.g. ICT, Education).
4. More use of sub committees - Strategic Committees are not the place for a detailed discussion or exploration of issues i.e. back and forth discussion with officers
5. Some support that there should be more opportunity for strategic committees to effectively operate as cross-party select committees – allowing scrutiny of key officers/topics
6. Lack of Member training, particularly on Finance, hindering effective scrutiny
7. Budget information – need detailed information to effectively scrutinise
8. Cost will be a constraint and needs to be considered alongside any options. Public will not view more committees in a positive light – increase travel and subsistence etc
9. Reducing number of Councillors on strategic committees will allow time to develop expertise in particular areas and enable better strategic decisions to be taken
10. Areas vs Strategic – key principle should be to devolve as much business as possible to local Committees. Staff resources need to be directed to allow this to happen.
11. limited support for public involvement in strategic committees – emphasis should be on ensuring mechanism for public involvement at local level

**Question 2 Working Groups and Boards How can member working groups, Policy Development Groups and Boards support strategic decision making? Any views/thoughts on 'ad hoc' calls for further reports or establishment of Working Parties/Groups? What criteria would determine the need for a working group to be established/disbanded?**

1. Agreement that there needs to be a space for effective discussion outwith Committees
2. Working group format works well with a well defined remit/purpose; need to have clear governance and refer into strategic committee on resource issues. Commercial Board and Redesign Boards are good examples – specific remit and focus, meets regularly so better engagement and scrutiny and development of member knowledge and expertise.
3. Working groups add value to the Member's role and develop knowledge and skills because it is easy to focus on one subject properly
4. Working groups need proper remit / empowerment - Trust - Delegate decision making to Working Groups and fully trust them to make decisions
5. Members collaborate better in Working Groups e.g. – CCFM debate in the chamber challenging – referred to Redesign and was dealt with in a consensual way
6. Do not be too prescriptive in setting up WG; need to agile/flexible in approach
7. In some cases there are too many groups e.g. multiple groups associated with health and social care
8. Need to be aware of the amount of staff resources required to support a working group and focus on the areas that are really needed and also consider sunset clauses - be clear at what stage the working group has fulfilled its role
9. Mixed views on Policy Development Groups. Positive: they allow good cross party discussion. Negative: there's a lack of buy-in, lack of clear purpose (ad-hoc requests), AND limited engagement/enthusiasm and lack consistent attendees.
10. Need broader attendance/involvement of members in working groups - not always clear what working groups are focusing on therefore not achieving broad member involvement
11. Identify purpose of working group and include representation of those who are affected by decisions - should not just include internal staff, need for broader representation e.g. third sector/partners.
12. Need to build and maintain trust within political groups
13. Working Groups/Boards – should be focussed on local issues and involve officers going to local areas to discuss with local committees

**Q 3. Effective Reports: What process should be followed for agreeing items for committee? What key checklist would you create before a paper is accepted at Committee?**

1. Agenda setting needs proper collaboration between Chair / Vice Chair and Officers
2. Too much information provided – need to be more concise, reduce duplication and reports need to be in plain English, with fewer acronyms and less jargon
3. Timing of reports – could they be made available earlier, 1 week is not long enough to give proper consideration
4. Need to identify the key information required for reports
5. Prepare and advance plan for the year on what is going to committee including the regular items – view currently Members don't have a view of what is coming up and when for discussion
6. Members would like a better understanding of the end-to-end process for reports in order to manage their expectations when asking for papers etc.
7. Using the day prior to Council for working groups / development needs to be considered
8. Should and contain more factual/statistical info
9. Need a better summary of issues and critical implications at the front e.g. staffing, costs/savings
10. Intelligence led reports – for straight forward decisions a basic report with core info. For more complex/controversial issues, more detailed reports with risks and issues identified
11. Need agreement on key areas/information that go to committee (Scheme of Delegation?)
12. Members need to clarify and agree what reports are needed e.g. certain level of audit reports done every year when not always needed – need to focus on key areas of business
13. There is not enough opportunity to influence recommendations in report
14. Reports are not just for Members but communities
15. Focus on improving outcomes, focus on strategic aims

**4. Functions/Remits: Have members any thoughts on an alternative model eg cabinet style. Could that work in Highland? Are presentations/introductions necessary/helpful? What purpose do they serve? Members bulletins/briefings – what is their experience of briefings – should we try to make greater/better use?**

1. Remits are too broad– not able to give time to key areas of business – need to simplify and streamline.
2. Housing shouldn't be across three committees, CLH and EDH too big.
3. Should be service based committees but also need to ensure integrated approach where issues cross over
4. Briefing notes to Members can be really helpful, a key tool to develop members knowledge, and should be used more often than reports for noting at committee Possibility to cover more routine/straightforward items via e-mail
5. Briefing papers – Ward Business key location but also potential to development the members intranet for this
6. Cabinet Style Governance Structure not well supported:
  - a. Points in favour – less cumbersome, more agile and quicker decisions; could supplement with function sub-groups to make recommendations to cabinet
  - b. Points against - too narrow a grouping making decisions and removes ability of wider group to influence / govern. Would weaken scrutiny and disenfranchise back bench members who would have a limited role. Not enough knowledge in a small group to make a properly informed decision, less democratic. Could result in a blame culture a preference for all to take responsibly for decisions. Could be divisive. Potential disconnect from the public and lack transparency – undermine local councillors ability to engage with their constituents agenda and represent them
7. Cut back on officer presentations – members should have read reports and reduce external presentations 'show and tell' within committees
8. Need to reach agreement on key areas/information that go to committee. Reduce items for noting
9. Need to manage the business better – time and level of work put into producing reports/presentations where either no questions raised or due to time of day, not given the time they deserve – often the most important issues.
10. Allocation of time during committee to discuss agenda points – should be done outwith committee and with most relevant officer
11. Committees currently less like a committee and more like a mini-Council. A less formal forum can help decision making
12. Develop sub-committee structure where discussion, creativity, Member/officer collaboration can take place
13. Use member knowledge and interest t encourage better engagement at committee

1. **Question 5 Improvement** What ideas do you have for improvement on the Council's current approach? Could Committees be made more efficient?
2. Break up Strategic Committees - too much business – sub-strategic groups, allocation of smaller groups of members and allow specialist knowledge and ownership to develop
3. The order of reports needs to be sorted out, there was agreement that there are too many for noting and that the focus of meetings should be on those items that require decisions – so these should be dealt with first
4. Papers – too many / too complex / overwhelming
5. More use of Working Groups
6. Smaller committee or sub-committees approach could increase value and democracy improve scrutiny
7. Technical infrastructure needs to improve e.g skype
8. Reports should be sent to Members earlier – one week is not enough time to do them justice. Aim should be to have papers out two weeks in advance
9. Better Agenda setting
10. Time for meetings – there should be a time limit on meetings – suggested that this should be five hours
11. Fewer Committees
12. Better Member understanding of end-to-end processes for papers
13. More members briefing notes
14. Costs needs to be considered, potential to reduce size of strategic committees to compensate
15. Does the committee structure really need to follow the directorate structure?
16. Project management is getting lost in strategic committees needs more focus and attention
17. Importance of how meetings are chaired
18. There was support for a refocused Members Library, which should be electronic – needs to be managed appropriately, kept up to date and accessible. This will allow some of the “noting” items to be moved off the agenda
19. More work required on ensuring that policies are being implemented effectively – call for a “sunset” clause which would require a monitoring report to be brought back to the relevant Committee after 12 months to determine success
20. Need to be clear in reports as to what resources are required, by whom, to implement policies and strategies agreed by Council

## WORKSHOP 2: LOCAL GOVERNANCE

**Question 1: Remits and Responsibilities** What should the areas have responsibility for and why? i.e. does the current scheme of delegation cover the right things – would you take any out/add any in? What benefits/risks would this bring? What accountability would be required?

1. More local autonomy: The default position should be local first/subsidiarity the scope and influence of local committees needs to be strengthened and expanded
2. More reports on the local delivery of education, health, housing and social care. Area Committees should be given true decision making powers in these respects and maintain control of the decisions
3. Need for clear delegated authority for area committees, a clear 'tiered decision making strategy' and set criteria to assess effectiveness of committees
4. Needs further disaggregation of budgets and include powers to raise funds and determine spend priorities e.g. tourist tax
5. Income generated locally should be retained and administered locally
6. Papers need to be about decisions
7. Some issues are taken to committee that are best resolved at ward business meeting level. The committees should be used where decisions are required; Ward Business for issues such as time sensitive responses or deals, funding applications to be fast tracked
8. More Community involvement in budget decision making and improving public understanding of the budget E.g. Housing; Street naming; Roads, waste etc. and potential to invite Community council to be ex-officio members
9. Lack of incentive for Members to bring items to local committee because of lack of follow up/action.
10. The following could be considered for inclusion in the Scheme of Delegation to area committees: Local By-laws; Setting of rents locally to reflect market forces and/or to reflect level of tenant support for additional investment in maintenance and investment – possible use of Participatory Budgeting; scrutiny of external organisations, for example BEAR.
11. Mixed views about whether planning decisions should be made on a more local basis

**Question2: Managing area business How effectively do area committees apply the Scheme of Delegation and what could improve this? Should local committees also have Questions and Motions?**

1. Different views about the effectiveness and value of local committees as currently structured
2. Scheme of Delegation needs to be clearer, area committees are not clear on what powers they have and so are not using them all Delegated powers are quite limited-need to be reviewed
3. More officer support needed to local area committees - officer support needs review and restructure
4. More decisions around allocation of resource will focus local interest
5. Need to ensure the public come with us – that they understand the model
6. Use Ward Business meeting to enable issues such as time sensitive responses or funding applications to be fast tracked
7. Mixed views on usefulness of Questions and Motions at area level, on balance against
8. Opportunity to link to Community Partnerships to make them more meaningful
9. Too much duplication - decisions made at Ward level are also brought to area committees - some not requiring action.
10. Local committees are most useful when the wards reflect genuine communities – otherwise there is no commonality of shared interest. They are interested in developing practical solutions in their area; good cross party working and good scrutiny
11. Recognition changes have been made and the budget context makes reversion to the old way of doing things more difficult.
  - a. Ideas for improvement include: aligned workforce to support the area structure, develop career paths and ensure appropriate staff are located in the right places.
  - b. Ensure meaningful information is provided at the local level – can be difficulties getting levels of information asked for at times.
  - c. Remove duplication of effort, whereby reports are sent to Area Committees then to Strategic Committees – could put in place a bulletin system for the strategic committees

**Question 3: Area Structure Would you re-shape the current area structure to enable improved governance at area level? What are your ideas for 'new areas' and how would these better serve communities? Should there be a minimum size of membership for Area Committees?**

1. Some area committees are not working well – issues range from being too small (Nairn) or too large or having inappropriate geographies (R&C) where member and community interest and issues do not align.
2. Some support that area committees should be a minimum of two wards, but little appetite for change in Skye and Raasay or Nairn No consensus over whether there should be minimum number of members per local committee
3. Agreement that there was need to review, particularly around size of wards and what is the most functional geography rather than being bound by existing wards - may be that Community Council areas become the boundaries for Area Committees (albeit this may mean local Members attending two Area Committees)? Need to understand and demonstrate net effect of any change
4. Suggestion for Inverness to be a city committee and the rural area could be absorbed into Nairn, B&S or other
5. Hampered by existing Ward boundaries – could be more sensibly drawn and agreed to identify a group of Members to take forward and lobby the boundary commission/Scottish minister for change and to raise in the Local Governance Review
6. Council and community and CPP interests and issues don't align geographically Opportunity to consider bringing local committee and community partnership boundaries together to ensure more competent decision making.
7. Need to consider greater collaboration across area boundaries and recognise there are synergies between area committees e.g. NW Sutherland and Caithness where there is cross border movement to access some services including NHS
8. Overall area structure needs a complete review which needs a full and proper project to deliver the change required
9. Needs to be holistic in approach and consider all areas of service delivery
10. Concern regards public perception – communities need to recognise boundaries and at present they don't
11. Question whether local committees could be made up from community council areas rather than wards
12. All involved need to feel like they belong to that community – need to think about how to achieve this at local committee level
13. Community Councils can play an important role in the future of the Area Committees, although there was some concern on Governance for this – there should not be votes for Community Councils, but space to allow them to speak.
14. Differing views on the role of Hearings as part of planning application process (wherever governance lies) – comparison with Cairngorm National Park Authority where every planning decision involves hearing from the applicant and the community – recognition that this may have knock on implication in time and cost.

**Question 4: Piloting new Approaches How/where could we trial new ideas? What work would be required with Members and communities prior to implementation of any changes?**



1. Support for a pilot project to be undertaken using a strong performing committee as an exemplar
2. A review might need 5 years to pilot and effect change
3. Support for trialling different approaches in different areas – differences could be around geography, remit of committees, community participation, piloting of motions and questions.
4. There have to be clear timeframes for the pilot, evaluation and roll out and not be allowed to drift.

## WORKSHOP 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Question 1: Listening to communities What works well currently, includes ‘many’ and makes a difference locally? What are the opportunities in your area for greater community involvement? E.g. decision making, influencing policy, key thematic engagement (community services budgets, common good, community transport, capacity building), information sharing.**

1. Need to share best practice
2. Ward Managers are a really valuable resource
3. Council should be enabler
4. City can be different to rural -less sense of community
5. Identifying local problems – removing the bureaucracy to solve around the table between partners
6. Creating a positive environment and attitudes where there is trust and a no blame culture
7. Recognition that joint solutions are needed for best use of scarce resources
8. There is equality around the table
9. Share purpose – commitment for all
10. Need to engagement with communities to define problems decide action and timescales  
Sutherland some positive examples:
  - a. Sutherland young carers bringing people together, create a space for their issues. Suggests that you can target and draw different groups into meetings are required on issues rather than disenfranchise young people in particular with bureaucratic meetings
  - b. Other areas of focus in Sutherland have included transport where there were vehicles but not drivers; fuel poverty and careers advice in schools

**Question2: Communication and feedback What do you think are the key challenges around communication and feedback with your communities? What are the potential solutions?**

1. Key challenges are trust, honest communication (when communities want to hear something different),
2. There is a lack of community engagement and responsibility, lack of autonomy, where communities are looking for involvement or consultation prior to decisions.
3. Communities expect a level of support that we often can't provide, meaning trust breaks down – need to manage demand and expectations
4. Social Media and our engagement with it is a challenge. Making effective use of Social Media provides greater reach and control of our message and avoids messages being misinterpreted.
5. There is a lack of recognition by communities about how we engage and we need to consider communicating less often but better on the things that are relevant – not everything is a democratic process.
6. Possible ways to communicate – newsletters update from Community Partnerships to Community Councils and communities – needs to be a more continuous flow of information in a targeted way
7. Use of surveys to gauge public opinion
8. Clarify our communications – Plain English

**Question 3. Developing Structures /People Engagement What mechanisms/ structures/processes do we need locally to enable greater and wider community involvement? How do we make it work for people to obtain broad participation and commitment? What work is required with Members /staff? What mechanisms do we need specifically for Community Council involvement?**

1. Need to build trust with communities - need to review how we filter information coming in from Communities to the Council and how we respond
2. We need to have checks and balances to ensure responsible and competent decision making.
3. Some challenges in engaging and including people including Community Councils – must be mindful of minority and quieter voices as well as the vocal ones
4. Many areas have numerous community bodies they need to collaborate and deliver for their community -The council (members and officers) can help this to happen
5. Questions for community - What do you need – or what do we need to deliver - open agenda on purpose and receiving feedback to secure community interest and buy-in – but engagement cannot be seen to be a promise on delivery or prioritisation.
6. Involve those who come and value their contribution. We need to identify individuals' interests and be action based, clarify the communities' responsibility and powers and empower them
7. e.g. Planning – an Official can attend a (joint?) meeting and as well as provide the required information, let people know what's within their grasp to take forward
8. Need to look at appropriate allocation of Officer time – involvement/attendance at meetings and at key stages (inc early engagement)
9. Need to actively encourage people into community councils, refresh groups and encourage diversity.
10. Need to communicate with community councils at the same level as we would anyone else within the Council.
11. Quarterly reports from all Community Councils feeding into Area Committee?
12. Take Community Councils to Community Partnership (with public and third sector agencies attending) – find ways to engage them or at least feed back to them
13. Depoliticise – focus on outcomes and be able to have 'safe conversation' this could be an enabler

**Question 4. Improving Partnerships In order to achieve better shared outcomes, how do we build stronger links between Community Partnerships and Local Committees?**

1. Awareness of community partnerships is perceived as quite low in a number of areas across the Highlands and communities not fully aware of what the partnerships are doing at a local level
2. Need to clarify the roles
3. Working with the Partnership Board can be very positive but a dedicated partnership resource makes a very positive difference
4. Perception there are different levels of commitment from partners – often down to individuals the extent to which things work
5. Challenges to establish the right culture with the CPP
6. Need to strengthen and empower partnerships to generate budget
7. An effective Chair is key
8. Need to enhance partnership with 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and CPP
9. Partnership approaches should empower communities
10. Focus by partners on problem solving – joint approach - cross-agency solutions - ‘one system working’ – collaborative, blending skills and knowledge
11. Circulate minutes to community councils? Can CCs be on sub-groups to support particular local activity?
12. Issue with boundaries around partners and service delivery models– things are not conterminous and remain at times confused – needs commitment to attend multiple meetings
13. Alignment with Community Partnership boundaries? - focus on delivery if this approach taken – concern of potential to replicate old local government boundaries
14. Benefit of visiting other Highland CPs and learn about approach in different localities
15. Very varied experiences of community partnership operations – Questions: what creates cohesion? Is this an issue of geography or co-dependency around best value/use of resources?
16. Is there a need to review the effectiveness of CPs – short life group and report back to CPP Board
17. Change approach to community partnership – can public members be added – enable another model that can secure funding not accessible just now?
18. Need to share best practice
19. Wider community needs to understand the CP structure and purpose
20. Does the CPP Board need to take a stronger lead?