



Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Board held remotely on Friday 21 August 2020 at 11.00 am.

Present:

The Highland Council:

Councillor Margaret Davidson, Leader of the Council
Councillor Alasdair Christie, Depute Leader
Donna Manson, Chief Executive

Highlands and Islands Enterprise:

David Oxley, Director of Business Growth

NHS Highland:

Ann Clark, Vice Chair, NHS Highland Board
Pamela Dudek, Deputy Chief Executive
Tim Allison, Director of Public Health

Police Scotland:

Chief Superintendent George Macdonald, Divisional Commander, North East Division

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

Derek Wilson, Local Senior Officer

High Life Highland:

Steve Walsh, Chief Executive

Highland Third Sector Interface:

Isobel Grigor, Chair of HTSI Board
Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer

Scottish Natural Heritage:

Graham Neville, Area Manager (Northern Isles and North Highland)

Skills Development Scotland:

Stephen Sheridan, Regional Skills Planning Lead

University of the Highlands and Islands:

Donald MacBeath, Principal of North Highland College

In attendance:

Carron McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place, Highland Council
Ian Kyle, Co-Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Delivery Group
Ross MacKillop, Chair, Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group
Cathy Steer, Chair, Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group
Niall MacLennan, Chair, Community Justice Partnership

Mr D Wilson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of Meetings

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Board – 28 February 2020;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 19 December 2019; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 11 March 2020.

3. 'Spirit 360' - A Strategic Funding Initiative for Highland Artists

There had been circulated Report No CPB/03/20 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland.

The Board **NOTED**:

- i. the intent to initiate 'Spirit 360' to deliver funding to the culture sector in the Highlands, whilst supporting the development of the Creative Scotland 'Place Partnership Strategy'; and
- ii. the details of the initiative provided in Appendix 1.

4. Community Planning impacts and actions as a result of Covid-19

The Chair led a discussion on Community Planning impacts and actions as a result of Covid-19, including ensuring appropriate vision, direction and governance were in place to support recovery.

The following documents had been circulated to inform the discussion:

- CPP priorities
- Questionnaire responses
- HIE Business Panel findings
- Developing a Framework for Participation and Involvement – report by the Council's Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

The Chair, the Director of Business Growth, HIE, and the Head of Policy, Highland Council, having spoken in amplification of the documents that had been circulated, detailed discussion took place during which the following main issues were raised:

- the issues raised by Community Partnerships mirrored the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) Delivery Group structure, and the CPP was in a good position to take the information provided and map it against the work currently taking place. However, it was queried how the information had been gathered when most Community Partnerships had not been active for the past few months;
- most of the issues identified were to be expected and had been seen elsewhere. However, there could be other hidden issues such as alcohol and substance misuse;

- there had been a huge demand for support and advice in terms of getting out and engaging with nature close to home, and the importance of mental health and wellbeing was emphasised;
- in addition to Community Partnerships, it would be helpful to gather feedback from HOIP Delivery Groups;
- the response from Caithness Community Partnership differed significantly from the other questionnaire responses and, from a strategic perspective, it would be interesting to know if that was related to it still having funding for community engagement. In that regard, it was explained that Caithness Community Partnership had continued to meet throughout the pandemic and had carried out an extensive survey with local groups. In addition, it had a strong third sector network which had also continued to meet, and a lot of learning could be taken from its approach;
- it was necessary to consider the extent to which Community Partnerships were expected to return to the production of statutory plans as opposed to Covid recovery, and it was queried whether there had been any communication with the Scottish Government or other CPPs in that regard. The Head of Policy, Highland Council undertook to raise the matter with Scottish Government colleagues and report back to partners;
- to better cope with the socio-economic impacts of Covid and the UK's imminent exit from the European Union, the CPP needed to refocus strategically in terms of its ongoing joint response and develop a regional recovery plan;
- it was suggested that it was necessary to establish some form of agreement setting out what was expected in terms of community participation/connectedness so that action could be prompted when expectations were not being met;
- a number of new positive concepts were emerging, and support was expressed for the concept of community wealth. In that regard, it was necessary to discuss what resources were available across the various localities and possibility take a differentiated approach given that some areas had extensive resources to support and sustain community resilience and others did not. From a Council perspective, the Chief Executive offered to look at how to move resource to get it into the right place to build community wealth;
- all partner organisations had individual recovery plans but they did not appear to have been joined up across the CPP;
- the increase in poverty as a result of Covid would impact on all partners and, further to the earlier comments regarding the need for a regional recovery plan, it was suggested that work be undertaken on the strategic mapping of resource with a view to developing a plan that was fit for purpose with measurable outcomes;
- in relation to engagement, it was not necessary to engage as individual organisations as well as the CPP but rather partners needed to join up their engagement processes. In addition, there was an issue in that staff who did not necessarily have the relevant skills were being asked to undertake engagement work;
- it was suggested that an analysis of the agility and best practice that had been achieved in response to Covid-19 be carried out with a view to applying the learning to the aspiration to have community-based resources;
- the need to move at pace was emphasised, and it was suggested that it would be helpful to look at the collective aspects of partners' recovery plans and focus on one or two strong actions that would have an impact;
- it was necessary to seize the opportunity to help communities and make changes that had been discussed for years;
- there had been an extraordinary improvement in partnership working during the pandemic and it was essential to ensure it continued;
- it was suggested that partners review the feedback from communities to establish whether there was anything that could be actioned immediately - eg from an NHS Highland perspective, greater support for communities trying to help people with mental health issues, recognising the need to join up with the work being undertaken by HTSI

in relation to mental health and wellbeing. In addition, it was important to capture any actions taken and feed back to communities and partners in that regard;

- many community groups did not understand what community planning was, and it was necessary to consider how to define and communicate the purpose of the CPP so that people engaged with it. In that regard, the Chief Executive, Highland Council, spoke to the work being undertaken by the Council in terms of digital inclusion/assessment and undertook to liaise with partners and seek collaboration with a view to developing a CPP communications plan. It was highlighted that there was an outstanding action in terms of developing both internal and external communication approaches. However, this had not been progressed due to the pandemic and, given that the CPP was now in a different place, it made sense to take a new approach;
- it was important to recognise the interconnected nature of the challenges people were experiencing;
- in relation to community wealth, it was important not to start afresh but from what already existed in communities and was working, and to link policy to practical action;
- the impact on businesses clearly had a wider impact in communities and the in-depth information from HIE was welcomed. The Director of Business Growth, HIE, invited partners to email him directly if they had any specific questions following the meeting;
- in relation to the report on Developing a Framework for Participation and Involvement, the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place explained that work was ongoing to attach timescales to the various strands set out in the Engagement Framework. Once that work was complete the framework would be shared and engagement would be welcomed if there were strands partners wanted to be involved in or if consultation/engagement activity could be dovetailed. The Leader of the Council added that the Council and HIE's community support teams needed to work closely together on the Engagement Framework;
- the need for coordination and ownership of joint plans and strategies was emphasised;
- in addition to recognising the community-level response, it was important to recognise the contribution of groups such as Calman Trust, Care and Learning Alliance and Connecting Carers, which did not just exist in one locale;
- it was necessary to be careful regarding the use of language, and concern was expressed regarding the phrase "trusted third sector groups" as it implied that some groups were not trusted;
- whilst it was good to have an Engagement Framework, it was important that it was measurable so there could be confidence it had made a difference;
- in relation to working collaboratively with community groups, whilst there was a desire to reduce bureaucracy and move at pace, some rules and regulations existed for a reason and it was necessary to find a balance and, in some instances, encourage groups to slow down activity;
- a number of the Community Learning and Development inspection findings were also relevant in terms of working in partnership with community groups;
- community activity, however well intentioned, could be harmful if it was not properly considered, and it was necessary to provide robust guidance and be careful about which activity to fund;
- there was a disconnect, at times, between the lives of vulnerable people and the offers of support they received, and it was suggested that a case management style of working was required;
- if working from home and online service delivery continued it could be a potential area of growth for the region, and it was necessary to discuss, as a CPP, the opportunities that existed and what could be developed and promoted that would aid recovery;
- it was suggested that Community Partnerships be encouraged to re-engage with communities and reflect upon how Covid could be incorporated into their various

statutory plans. However, to support their work locally, Community Partnerships also required direction from the Board in terms of the CPP's strategic priorities;

- in relation to funding streams, it was suggested that Community Partnerships be reminded of the availability of the CPP Small Grants Budget. However, confirmation of the criteria and process was required before any funding could be released;
- in relation to the earlier discussions on the need for a communications plan, it was highlighted that there was £5k of Aspiring Communities funding remaining, to be used for a legacy project, and it had previously been suggested that this could be put towards developing a CPP app;
- it was necessary to re-evaluate what the CPP was to ensure it was meaningful, fit for purpose and seen as significant in Highland communities, and it was suggested that a development day would be useful;
- the fact that the Board met in private was not helpful in terms of increasing people's understanding of community planning, and it was suggested that consideration be given to holding at least part of future meetings in public, inviting members of the press and public to attend, and webcasting, if possible, to try and build some momentum; and
- many people were working phenomenally hard in challenging circumstances, and it was necessary to recognise, and communicate, the efforts of staff and communities.

Further discussion took place on how best to progress the proposed work in terms of the strategic mapping of resource and the need for a strategic refocus/regional recovery plan. It was suggested that it be taken forward by the Partnership Coordinating Group (PCG) and a report be presented to the next meeting of the Board. However, it was recognised that it was broader than the PCG and it was suggested that collaboration take place with other partner representatives as appropriate. In relation to regional recovery, it was first necessary to understand what was happening at agency level and it was suggested that all partners provide a short paper on their organisation's recovery plan and new priorities.

Thereafter, the Board **AGREED**:

- i. the Head of Policy, Highland Council, would liaise with Scottish Government colleagues in terms of the extent to which Community Planning Partnerships were expected to return to the production of statutory plans as opposed to Covid recovery, and report back to partners;
- ii. the Partnership Coordinating Group, in collaboration with other partner representatives as appropriate, undertake a piece of work on the strategic mapping of resource and the need for a strategic refocus/regional recovery plan, and report back to the next meeting of the Board;
- iii. to inform discussions regarding regional recovery, partners provide, by Friday 11 September 2020, a short paper on their organisation's recovery plan and what their new priorities were;
- iv. partners review the feedback from communities shared by the Council to establish whether there was anything their organisation could respond to quickly, take action as appropriate, and feed back to communities and partners;
- v. the Chief Executive, Highland Council, would liaise with partners about the work taking place by the Council in terms of digital inclusion/assessment, and seek collaboration with a view to developing a CPP communications plan;
- vi. Community Partnerships be encouraged to re-engage with communities and reflect upon how Covid could be incorporated into their various statutory plans;
- vii. Community Partnerships be reminded of the availability of the CPP Small Grants Budget, subject to confirmation of the criteria and process; and
- viii. that an analysis be carried out, and circulated to partners prior to the next meeting of the Board, of the agility and best practice that had taken place in response to Covid-19.

5. Strategic Risk Register Review

The Strategic Risk Register had been circulated for discussion/review in light of Covid-19.

The Board **AGREED** that no changes be made at present and that the register be reviewed at the next meeting to establish whether there had been any reduction in the risks described as a result of the actions being taken.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** that, based upon the previously agreed schedule, The Highland Council would take over Chairing the Board with effect from 1 October 2020; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the meeting scheduled to take place on Friday 25 September 2020 be cancelled and a new schedule of dates be arranged in consultation with the incoming Chair.

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm.