



Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Board held in the HIE Boardroom, Ground Floor, An Lòchran, Inverness Campus, Inverness, and via Microsoft Teams, on Friday 9 December 2022 at 11.30 am.

**Present:**

**The Highland Council:**

Councillor Raymond Bremner, Leader of the Council (Teams)  
Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chair of Communities and Place Committee

**Highlands and Islands Enterprise:**

Stuart Black, Chief Executive  
Eann Sinclair, Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland (also representing Caithness Community Partnership)

**NHS Highland:**

Ann Clark, Vice Chair, NHS Highland Board (Teams)  
Pamela Dudek, Chief Executive (Teams)

**Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:**

Michael Humphreys, Area Commander (Teams)

**Community Partnership representative:**

Eann Sinclair, Chair of Caithness Community Partnership (also representing HIE)

**High Life Highland:**

Steve Walsh, Chief Executive

**Highland Third Sector Interface:**

Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer

**NatureScot:**

Dave Mackay, Head of Operations – North (Teams)

**Skills Development Scotland:**

Stephen Sheridan, Regional Skills Planning Lead (Teams)

**In attendance:**

Allan Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place, The Highland Council (Teams)  
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Delivery Group  
Jenny Valentine, Chair, Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group (Teams)  
Cathy Steer, Chair, Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group  
Elisabeth Smart, Interim Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (Teams)  
Melanie Murray, Committee Administrator, The Highland Council

## Also in attendance:

Ms E Witham, Principal Project Manager, Highland Adapts (Teams)

Mr N McLaughlan, Biodiversity Partnership Officer, The Highland Council

Ms F Richardson, Community Learning and Development Support Officer, High Life Highland

## Mr S Black in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Tim Allison, Conrad Trickett, Donna MacKinnon, Cath Wright and Chris O'Neil.

#### 2. Minutes of Meetings

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Board – 7 October 2022, subject to the reference to the Living Wage under item 5 being amended to “real Living Wage”;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 21 June 2022; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 23 August 2022.

#### 3. Action Tracker

The Board was asked to review progress of its agreed actions as set out in the Action Tracker which had been circulated.

During discussion, it was confirmed that an update in respect of Transport Problems and Opportunities: Evidence from Community Consultations would be provided at the next meeting. In relation to the resourcing of community planning, particularly the appointment of staff, it was explained that the Partnership Development Manager post had gone through the necessary Council process and would be advertised imminently.

The Chair having welcomed the provision of a RAG column as requested at the previous meeting, the Board:

- i. **NOTED** the action tracker;
- ii. **AGREED** that an update in respect of Transport Problems and Opportunities: Evidence from Community Consultations be provided at the next meeting of the Board; and
- iii. **AGREED** that an update on the resourcing of Community Planning, particularly the appointment of staff, be provided at the next meeting of the Board.

#### 4. Presentation: Highland Adapts Update

Emma Whitham, Principal Project Manager, gave a presentation on Highland Adapts, a place-based climate change adaptation initiative covering the Highland region, the purpose of which was to bring communities, businesses, land managers and the public sector together to facilitate transformational action towards a prosperous and climate-ready Highland. Information was provided on the partnership model; the climate risk and opportunity assessment methodology and the associated timeline; the four key elements of

Highland Adapts, namely, People, Place, Communication and Education; and the progress that had been made since the previous presentation in December 2021. Further information was available on the Highland Adapts website and social media pages.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- information was sought, and provided, as to the impact on the ground of the North Highland Climate Hub;
- the Chair of the Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group and the Principal Project Manager, Highland Adapts, undertook to liaise regarding potential opportunities for collaboration and to build the work of Highland Adapts into the resilience element of the Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group's Action Plan;
- the more the climate change agenda had meaning to people on an individual level, the more likely they were to engage;
- the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) was currently looking at alcohol over-provision statements, the arguments in respect of which tended to be economic rather than people or place based. The Interim Chair of the HADP invited the Principal Project Manager to attend a future meeting to discuss climate change issues and initiate a discussion by the HADP about climate change within its strategic planning. The Principal Project Manager confirmed she would be happy to liaise in that regard, commenting that to truly develop a place-based approach to risk assessment it was imperative to keep climate justice in mind. The most vulnerable people were often the hardest to reach but would be most impacted by climate change; and
- given the level of interest, the Chair suggested that a further update be provided in six months' time.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a further update be provided in six months' time.

## 5. **Highland Environment Forum: Report on activities and opportunities for future action**

There had been circulated Report No CPB/8/22 on behalf of the Highland Environment Forum (HEF).

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- in relation to skills development and training, SDS was currently liaising with UHI Inverness regarding its curriculum and the underutilisation of the forestry school, and it would be helpful to get the views of the HEF in terms of demand and feed that into the system. The Regional Skills Planning Lead, SDS, undertook to liaise with the Biodiversity Partnership Officer, Highland Council, in that regard;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there were any new opportunities, from an environmental perspective, to focus on the CPP's key interest in addressing inequalities. In that regard, it was highlighted that High Life Highland's Countryside Rangers had been active in the Merkinch area of Inverness. Merkinch Nature Reserve was one of the few urban nature reserves in the country and the local community had been actively involved;
- the Chair of the Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group undertook to liaise with the Biodiversity Partnership Officer, Highland Council, in terms of how the resilience element might link in with the work of the HEF;

- the work of the HEF was commendable and information was sought, and provided, as to what was being done to promote it elsewhere in the country and encourage other regions to adopt the same model;
- in relation to the HEF's future work programme, it was suggested that work be undertaken to promote the opportunities that existed in terms of peatland restoration. There was considerable funding available, and it could create work in some of Highland's more disadvantaged areas such as North West Sutherland and parts of the Flow Country. In response, it was explained that Becky Shaw, NatureScot, was leading on green skills provision, and peatland restoration was one of the areas being looked at. However, there were limitations, both in terms of the number of interested applicants and contractors able to do the work. The Regional Skills Planning Lead, SDS, who worked closely with Becky Shaw on the skills agenda, undertook to liaise with her on the matter. The Chair added that HIE had a role in terms of promoting the opportunities to contractors, and suggested that the Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland, be involved in the discussions;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding engagement with employers, particularly large retail employers who were often governed by national policy; and
- Cairngorms National Park Authority had a keen interest in biodiversity and was looking for partners as it developed its new strategy.

The Board:

- i. **AGREED** to continue to support the work of the Highland Environment Forum;
- ii. **NOTED** the role of the Highland Environment Forum in delivering the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan by connecting and enabling local communities to play their role in mitigating and adapting to the climate and nature emergency; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Regional Skills Planning Lead, SDS, instigate discussions with Becky Shaw, NatureScot, and other relevant officers, including the Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland, HIE, regarding promoting the opportunities that existed in terms of peatland restoration.

## 6. Cost of Living Workshop Feedback

The Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland, HIE, provided feedback on the earlier CPP Cost of Living Workshop. Issues discussed included what could and should be done, both by individual partners and as a CPP, whilst acknowledging that many of the effects of the cost of living crisis were not within local/regional control to mitigate; the impacts of the crisis on communities, community assets and social enterprises; the potential to do more in terms of redundancy support/PACE (Partnership Action for Continuing Employment); being more collaborative and, as partner organisations went through their individual budget-setting processes, the need to be cognisant of the potential unintended consequences of one partner's decisions on other partners; the need for better communication, both within the CPP and externally; what tools were already available – eg making better use of windfarm community benefit funds; and direct and indirect health impacts, particularly the impact on mental health and wellbeing, and the knock-on effect in terms of demand for services.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- the Chair suggested that the key points raised at the workshop be summarised and circulated to partners, and that an update be provided at the next meeting;
- the Chief Executive, NHS Highland, highlighted that she sat on the national Community Planning Improvement Board, at which similar discussions had taken place;
- during difficult financial times, different accountabilities could pull individual partner organisations back into silos. Decisions taken individually could have significant

- ramifications for the general population and it was necessary to be mindful of that and, as discussed at the workshop, the potential unintended consequences for other partners;
- income maximisation was critical. It was highlighted that the maximum uptake of any benefit in the UK was approximately 70%, therefore almost a third of people entitled to money were not claiming it. Part of the issue was that, due to data protection legislation, organisations were unable to share information. Whilst it was recognised that measures were needed to protect people's data, it was suggested that a review was needed, taking cognisance of the cost of living crisis, of what information organisations could share for the benefit of individuals. The Chief Executive, NHS Highland, confirmed that this had been raised nationally and a short-life working group had been established to look at it. She undertook to feed back to the Board as further information became available;
  - the work Social Security Scotland was doing in terms of the different methodologies being adopted to reach out to people and their engagement with the Third Sector and Community Partnerships was exemplary, and it was suggested it would be useful to invite a representative to attend a future meeting of the Board; and
  - there was an opportunity to upskill staff in universal services to enable them to speak to the families they came into contact with about financial pressures and signpost them to appropriate services. It was suggested that learning could be taken from the work Health Visitors had done in that regard as well as NHS Highland's "Money Counts" staff training course.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the feedback;
- ii. **AGREED** that the key points raised at the workshop be summarised and circulated to partners, and that an update be provided at the next meeting of the Board; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a representative of Social Security Scotland be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss what they were doing in relation to the cost of living crisis.

## 7. Update on Suicide Prevention Activity

The Chair of the Suicide Prevention Steering Group provided a verbal update on the current position of the Steering Group, future action planning and the Kessock Bridge Sub-Group. She explained that she had prepared a paper covering these matters in more detail which would be circulated to partners following the meeting.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- reference was made to a report by The Health Foundation which suggested that young adult males were disproportionately affected by health inequalities across a range of issues, including suicide, and information was sought, and provided, as to what sort of focus there was on that particular demographic;
- the Director of Public Health's Annual Report 2021 had been on the subject of suicide and mental health, and it was confirmed it was one of the key drivers for action planning for the coming year; and
- the progress and momentum in respect of what was a very important issue were welcomed.

The Board **NOTED** the update and that a paper on the suicide prevention activity taking place would be circulated to partners following the meeting.

## 8. Presentation: “My Life in the Highlands and Islands” Survey

Eann Sinclair, Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland, HIE, provided a verbal presentation on the “My Life in the Highlands and Islands” survey, one of the biggest surveys commissioned by HIE to which over 5000 residents had responded. It could be used as a data source for strategic planning and conversations with partners and government and, whilst it pre-dated the current energy and cost of living crisis, having been carried out in early 2021, many of the findings mirrored the current challenges. Levels of pride in local communities remained high. However, inequalities persisted and undoubtedly would have increased over the past few months. Key issues raised included access to/distance from services, housing availability and employment. Public sector employment in particular was classed as a reason for people moving to the area, which had implications for partners in terms of talent attraction. There was a detailed presentation on the survey findings which he undertook to circulate to partners.

The Chair added that there was a huge amount of information in the survey, and Scottish Government Ministers had commented that it was a useful data source. He suggested it would be helpful to break it down by geographical area and use the local data to inform discussions at Community Partnership level.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that HIE’s research team, who had commissioned the survey, was liaising with partners regarding the findings;
- housing was a significant issue for all partners, particularly in terms of recruitment and retention of staff in remote and rural areas, and it was necessary to find ways of addressing it. The Chair suggested that the Council’s Head of Development and Regeneration, Allan Maguire, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss the Strategic Housing Investment Plan;
- the survey was a rich data source that would enhance the intelligence already available, and it was necessary to consider how to utilise it to focus and drive the work of the CPP;
- access to services was a significant challenge for NHS Highland, and it would be helpful to receive the detail of the findings in that regard;
- the Council was keen to extend its working relationship with partners such as High Life Highland to expand access to services. Physical access remained important, despite services increasingly being made available digitally, as not everyone had access to a computer/mobile device or broadband. However, the overheads were higher than for digital services. The Council’s Redesign Board was undertaking a review of how the Council connected with its customers, but it was important to look at it not only from a Council perspective but from a community perspective and across all CPP partners as working together more closely would deliver more sustainable benefits. The Chief Executive, High Life Highland, supported the comments made, adding that co-location enabled cross-pollination of services, increased footfall exponentially and benefited customers;
- having a Highlands and Islands-specific piece of work was valuable, particularly in the current climate, and it was hoped to continue it if possible;
- necessitated by legislation, partners undertook a number of pieces of consultative work and there would be merit in establishing a CPP SharePoint site to enable the storing/sharing of information. It was added that finding a way to coordinate consultation through CPPs would potentially loosen the legislative requirements for multiple consultations, and it was suggested this be raised at the national Community Planning Improvement Board;
- reference was made to a report to the Board a number of years ago that had projected a workforce gap of 45,000 by the end of the current decade, 50% of which was unskilled.

It would be useful to see an updated post-Brexit and post-pandemic workforce projection and to understand what information the CPP had that might be relevant to considering the gap;

- community-owned housing was a useful way for remote and rural communities to make an income in terms of sustaining local development activity whilst at the same time providing social housing. The Chair added that HIE was supporting a number of community-based housing initiatives and it was necessary to do something to accelerate the process;
- the Chair suggested that consideration be given to tailoring more detailed presentations on the survey findings to individual partner organisations, particularly in terms of access to health and local government services; and
- the Public Health intelligence team was currently updating community profiles and it would be useful to link in with the survey findings which would provide a rich data source at local level.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the verbal presentation;
- ii. **AGREED** that the presentation on the survey findings be circulated to partners;
- iii. **AGREED** that consideration be given to tailoring more detailed presentations on the survey findings to individual partner organisations;
- iv. **AGREED** that the Council's Head of Development and Regeneration, Allan Maguire, be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board to discuss the Strategic Housing Investment Plan; and
- v. **AGREED** that the possibility of establishing a CPP SharePoint site to enable the storing/sharing of information be explored.

## 9. Highland Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan 2021-2024: Annual Progress Report

There had been circulated Report No CPB/9/22 by the Chair of the Community Learning, Development and Engagement Delivery Group.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- the positive progress that had been made and the findings from the Education Scotland HM Inspectors' visit were welcomed and thanks were expressed to all involved. Particular thanks were expressed to Fiona Richardson, CLD Support Officer, who was moving on to another role, for all the work she had done in relation to CLD over the years. She had worked tirelessly to support partnership working at all levels, and it was hoped her post would be filled as it had had a real impact;
- the huge amount of community activity taking place and the extensive number of organisations working collaboratively at community level was clear, and partners were encouraged to have a look at some of the excellent local examples in the links within the progress report; and
- on the point being raised, it was explained that, to date, the links between Highland Cares and other areas of work such as the Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group, NHS Highland's mental health planning activities, integrated children's services planning activities etc had not been as strong as they could be. However, now was the time to pull these strands of work together, and the addition of Tina Stones, Senior Lead Manager, Safeguarding and Community Partnerships, Highland Council, who had a key role in terms of Highland Cares, to the CLD Strategic Group meant that the opportunity was there to make the necessary connections.

The Board **NOTED**:

- i. the progress, including key achievements, made in year one of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan (Appendix 1 of the report);
- ii. the priorities and focus for year two of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan, and;
- iii. the findings from the Education Scotland HM Inspectors' CLD visit to Highland Council (Appendix 2 of the report).

## 10. Scottish Government Inquiry into Community Planning

There had been circulated Report No CPB/10/22 by the CPP Senior Officers Group.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- there was a lot of good feedback and learning to share, and support was expressed for submitting a response to the Inquiry from the Highland CPP;
- the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan had been written in 2017. A great deal had happened since then and the Inquiry was an opportunity to take stock and self-evaluate;
- as evidenced by the earlier discussions, there was a lot of good collaborative work taking place and it would be helpful to include examples of good practice. However, it was also necessary to be honest about what was not working and what could be done better;
- it was important the response represented the CPP as a whole and not individual organisations' views. The Chief Officer, HTSI, sought the opportunity to provide input on behalf of the Third Sector, adding that she had previously circulated the views of the Third Sector to the CPP and had not yet received a response. It was suggested that these be re-circulated to partners and to inform the response;
- the methodology for putting together the response having been queried, it was explained that it would be drafted by the Head of Community Support and Engagement, Highland Council, and all views would be taken on board. The tight timescale having been highlighted, it was suggested that partners email their comments to the Head of Community Support and Engagement by Monday 19 December;
- given the increasing challenges, it was incumbent on the CPP to try to strengthen partnership working. It was also necessary to consider what was needed from a central perspective to support the CPP to be successful; and
- it was highlighted that organisations/individuals could respond to the Inquiry separately if they so wished.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the background and context to the Scottish Government's Inquiry into Community Planning;
- ii. **AGREED** that partners email their comments on the questions set out in the report to the Head of Community Support and Engagement, Highland Council, by Monday 19 December 2022 to enable a response to the Inquiry to be formulated on behalf of the Highland Partnership and agreed in conjunction with the Chair of the CPP Board in advance of the deadline of 30 December 2022;
- iii. **AGREED** that the views of the Third Sector, which had been circulated previously, be re-circulated to partners and to inform the response; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the response should include examples of good practice.

## 11. Review of Strategic Risk Register

The Strategic Risk Register had been circulated for review.

The Chair requested that risk owners/leads be identified for the next meeting, particularly in respect of the risks currently scored red, namely, Covid Resilience and the Cost of Living Crisis.

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the updated risk in respect of support and resourcing for people fleeing the crisis in Ukraine;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed risk in respect of the cost of living crisis; and
- iii. **AGREED** that risk owners/leads be identified for the next meeting, particularly in respect of the risks currently scored red, namely, Covid Resilience and the Cost of Living Crisis.

## 12. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place at 9.30 am on Friday 17 February 2023.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm.