

The Highland Council

Minutes of the meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 5 February 2025 at 9.30am.

Present:

Dr C Birt	Ms L Kraft
Mrs M Cockburn	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mr D Fraser	Mrs A MacLean (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mrs K MacLean
Mr J Grafton	Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mr R Gunn (remote)	Mrs M Reid
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)	Ms M Ross (remote)
Ms L Johnston	Ms M Smith (remote)
Ms E Knox	

Non-Members present:

Mr R Bremner	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr S Coghill (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr J Edmondson	Mr C Munro
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr M Reiss
Mr M Gregson (remote)	Mrs T Robertson
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr R Stewart
Mr B Lobban (remote)	

NHS Highland representatives:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health
Ms R MacDonald, Depute Director of Adult Social Care
Mrs P Stott, Chief Officer

Third sector representatives in attendance:

Dr G Rodger, Inspiring Young Voices
Ms R Hatfield, Inspiring Young Voices

Participating Officials:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
Ms F Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer Health and Social Care
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer, Integrated People Services
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work
Mr I Kyle, Lead Officer Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health
Ms C McLaughlan, Programme Manager (The Promise)
Mr J Maybee, Head of Criminal Justice, Social Work Services
Ms M Cano, Justice Service Manager, Social Work Services
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Mr D Fraser in the Chair

**1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence
Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKintosh.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

**3. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** updates on the following topics:

- The forthcoming joint inspection of adult social care service, with a focus on mental health and unpaid carers;
- Keeping The Promise pilot project;
- The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment;
- Whole Family Wellbeing;
- New Improvement Approach;
- Unicef Baby Friendly Award, which the Chair highlighted as a significant achievement;
- Comraich (support for the separated, asylum-seeking young people)
- The Family Centre; and
- Scottish Association of Social Workers Mental Health Officer National Conference in February 2025.

**4. Revenue Budget and Performance Report – Quarter 3
Slàinte is Cùram Sòisealta – Buidseat Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus
Aithisg Coileanaidh – Ràith 3**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/01/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the shortage of independent care providers for people with complex needs, as reported in paragraph 5.1 of the report, was a national emergency being considered at a high level;
- clarification was sought and provided that reference to direct payments in the table in paragraph 7.1 of the report related to Self Directed Support, Option 1;
- further information was sought and provided on activities being undertaken to develop and deliver early healthcare protection, promotion, and prevention;
- while expressing concern that implementation of the Solihull approach remained red, the improving position was positive;
- clarification was sought and provided on the figures for the percentage of people over 65 with long term care needs, which was ragged red, and the development of strategic proposals to tackle this;
- with kinship care being preferable to foster care, reference was made to the poverty that sometimes faced kinship carers, and it was queried whether the number of residence orders were being increased;

- noting that ongoing vacancies were reducing the budget overspend, information was requested, and would be provided outwith the meeting, on what the overspend would have been, if the vacancies had been filled;
- attention was drawn to the ongoing challenges for delivering adult social care and it was queried whether Highland faced significant additional challenges as a result of the geography, demographics, and imminent change to the delivery model; and
- the recent addition of £20 million to assist in delivering change through the adult social care joint strategic plan was welcomed.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the forecast revenue position as at Quarter 3 of the 2024/25 financial year;
- APPROVED** the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- APPROVED** the Service's performance and risk information; and
- AGREED** information be provided to the Committee on the impact of vacancies on the overspend and the extent of the overspend if the recurrent savings created by vacancies were removed.

5. The Draft Promise Plan An Dreachd Plana Geallaidh

There had been circulated Report No HCW/02/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was pointed out that remote and rural issues, as well as climate change, were significant concerns for young people and this should be reflected in the report's impact assessment;
- the draft Plan was welcomed as it demonstrated the seriousness with which the Council took its role as a corporate parent, and the voice of the child was represented throughout;
- it was important to also represent those who had lived through negative experiences, and to ensure children's rights and requests were taken seriously and actioned;
- the importance of including birth parents wherever possible and appropriate when dealing with children in kinship or foster care was highlighted;
- with reference to the high level of vacancies, it was queried what could be done to ensure the Plan was actioned. The risk to service delivery of the vacancy level was highlighted;
- it was vital that reports included lived experience and used language that was understandable to all;
- it was queried whether community councils had been consulted on the draft Plan, and the value of the local knowledge and information that could be provided by community councils was summarised;
- information was sought on progress with a new children's home in Thurso; and
- the high level of aspiration in the draft Plan was welcomed, with particular reference to the co-design and involvement of young people. It was important to consider the trauma and financial difficulties that might be faced by care experienced young people entering the workforce.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** and scrutinised the Draft Promise Plan; and
- ii. **AGREED** that an annual report of the progress of the Promise Plan be submitted to Committee for scrutiny and assurance of Highland's progress in achieving the aspirations of the Promise.

6. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Report Update – Person Centred Solutions Portfolio
Sgrùdadh Buidseat agus Aithisg Adhartais a' Phlana Libhrigidh – Raon-ùghdarras Fuasglaidhean Stèidhichte air an Neach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/03/25 by the by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chief Officer, Integrated People Services, explained that, in relation to paragraph 3.1 of the report which stated there were no resource implications, this was not accurate and the implications were detailed in the narrative.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the value of daycare facilities and community hubs was highlighted, and could be more adequately referenced in the report;
- the third sector was considered the glue in the mechanics between the Council and NHS Highland, and it was of concern that funding to many third sector organisations was being reduced or cut;
- it was of concern that increasing numbers of people were isolated in their homes, relying on technology and, in this respect, attention was drawn to the benefits of taking a longer-term view to develop age friendly communities, to provide a varied range of housing types and sizes, and to provide services such as the handyman service, and shopmobility, with further information on the latter being sought on this outwith the meeting;
- in relation to agency staff and unpaid family carers staying in short term accommodation, the proposed visitor levy might have a detrimental impact;
- information was sought on the contracting of third sector organisations and on support for unpaid care workers. The need for longer-term contracts to allow third sector organisations to plan for more than one year was highlighted;
- assurance was sought in relation to housing that a broad long-term plan was being considered, especially for rural areas, and it was queried whether rural GP training hubs were part of a longer term vision;
- the need for the development of frailty units to reduce the number of elderly people going into hospital was queried, and a brief summary was provided by the NHS Chief Officer;
- the vital role played by unpaid carers was emphasised and support for them urged, noting the financial burden that would be faced if not for their unpaid work;
- attention was drawn to the value of intergenerational support; and
- community councils could be a vital and important source of information and assistance in the planning of local care plans and in keeping communities fully informed. Early engagement with them was urged.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the updates provided for Projects/Programmes in the report.

**7. Justice Service Highland Council Update (including annual reports)
Fios às Ùr mu Sheirbheis Ceartais Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd (a' gabhail a-steach aithisgean bliadhna)**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/04/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the importance of education and rehabilitation for prisoners was emphasised, with reference to the low rate of imprisonment in Norway, compared with Scotland's relatively high rate. A summary was provided of some of the policies being pursued in Scotland, and some of the challenges being faced. Particular focus was given to the availability of rehabilitation services for prisoners on longer sentences, and that community-based sentences were often more effective than short-term prison stays. Further publicity on this, and on the usefulness of community payback schemes, would be beneficial;
- with reference to the doubled capacity of the new prison in Inverness, the current location of registered sex offenders was queried;
- information was sought and provided on the Prisoners (Early Release) (Scotland) Bill, as summarised in paragraph 5.1 of the report;
- the level of investment in staffing for police and justice support was queried and summarised, as was the use being made of current funding;
- noting the number of people in prison experiencing trauma and mental health issues, information was sought and provided on the resources available to provide appropriate support;
- information was sought and would be provided outwith the meeting on Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements;
- the impact on the CPS of the early prison release scheme was queried;
- it was disappointing if funding for restorative justice was reduced;
- an advantage of prison stays for some people with addiction and / or medical problems was that they were less likely to miss appointments and treatment; and
- the gap between public perception and the reality of the outcomes of research and experience of some areas of justice could be significant.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

**8. Highland Children and Young People Participation Strategy
Ro-innleachd Com-pàirteachais Chloinne agus Dhaoine Òga na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/05/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the level of engagement with children and young people was unprecedented and welcomed, and information was sought on how this had been achieved. It was disappointing that this participation was not always viewed as a core element of professional practice across all areas of work;
- the importance of children and young people enjoying the participation process was pointed out; and
- the Youth Convener should be invited to future Committee meetings.

The Committee **NOTED** the Children and Young People's Participation Strategy and **AGREED** to invite the Youth Convener to future Committee meetings.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 25 September 2024; and
- ii. Child Protection Committee held on 5 September 2024.

10. National Care Service and Model of Integration Update Fios às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Chùraim Nàiseanta agus mun Mhodail Amalachaidh

With the agreement of the Chair, this item had been added to the agenda as an urgent item following the announcement by the Scottish Government on the proposed National Care Service legislation due to the potential implications of this to the application of the future model of integration

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, assurance was sought and provided that regular updates would be provided to the full Council and to the NHS Highland Board, and that any queries on impact to service delivery could be discussed outwith the meeting, but were not anticipated. The steering group composition would be included in the report to the Council and assurance was provided that implementation of the Adult Social Care Strategic Plan and the use of the additional £20 million of funding for ASC would run parallel to the forthcoming changes to the model of integration.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the current position in relation to the National Care Service Bill set out by the Scottish Government on 23 January 2025;
- ii. the current position in relation to the review the model of governance in place in Highland as considered by the Council on 12 December 2024; and
- iii. that further updates providing clarity on the legal, financial and governance implications would come forward to future meetings of the Council.

And further **AGREED** the need to proceed at pace with the identified work in terms of the consideration of the care and governance model given the announcements made last week by the Minister.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm