



Highland
Community
Planning
Partnership

Com-pàirteachas
Dealbhadh
Coimhearsnachd

na Gàidhealtachd

Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Friday 19 September 2025 at 10.00 am.

Present:

The Highland Council:

Councillor Raymond Bremner, Leader of the Council
Derek Brown, Chief Executive

Highlands and Islands Enterprise:

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

NHS Highland:

Sarah Compton-Bishop, Chair, NHS Highland Board
Fiona Davies, Chief Executive
Jennifer Davies, Director of Public Health

Police Scotland:

Chief Superintendent Rob Shepherd, Divisional Commander, Highland and Islands

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:

Group Commander Karla Stevenson (substitute)

The Scottish Government:

Donna MacKinnon, Scottish Government Place Director

Community Partnership representative:

Eann Sinclair, Chair of Caithness Community Partnership (also representing Highlands and Islands Enterprise)

High Life Highland:

Steve Walsh, Chief Executive

Highland Third Sector Interface:

Mhairi Wylie, Chief Officer

Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership (HITRANS):

Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director

NatureScot:

Graham Neville, Head of Operations - North

Skills Development Scotland:

Roddy Bailey, Area Manager

University of the Highlands and Islands:

Vicki Nairn, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, UHI

In attendance:

Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council
Fiona Malcolm, Chief Officer – Integrated People Services, The Highland Council
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Strategic Group
Judy Hill, Chair, Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group
James Maybee, Chair, Community Justice Partnership
Carron McDiarmid, Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP)
Gail Prince, Partnership Development Manager
Melanie Murray, Principal Committee Officer, The Highland Council

Also in attendance:

Eve MacLeod, HADP Coordinator
Mark McAllister, Organisational Lead for Strategic Development, Public Health Scotland
Phil Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager, The Highland Council

Ms Sarah Compton-Bishop in the Chair**Business****1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Graham MacKenzie and Lynne Gow.

2. Declarations of Interest

For transparency, the Chair of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership declared a connection, as a Non-Executive Director of Public Health Scotland, to the items relating to public health. However, there was no conflict of interest.

The Chief Officer, HTSI, declared an interest in item 8 as a Board Member of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Board **NOTED** the position.

3. Minutes of Meetings

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Partnership Board – 6 June 2025;

- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 13 May 2025; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 11 June 2025.

4. Action Tracker

The Chair of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership declared a connection to this item as a Non-Executive Director of Public Health Scotland. However, there was no conflict of interest.

The Board was asked to review progress of its agreed actions as set out in the Action Tracker which had been circulated, and the Chair proposed that the actions marked as “completed” be removed.

In relation to the review of the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the Active Highland Partnership Group, it was explained that it was necessary to identify, in the TOR, the individuals who were empowered to deliver against the outcomes in the Active Highland Strategy. Further consultation was required in that regard, and an extension to the December Board was requested.

An update was provided regarding integrating NatureScot’s Landscape-Scale Natural Capital Tool into the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP), during which it was explained that the agreed short-life working group had been established and had met twice to agree TOR, receive a demonstration of the Natural Capital Tool and decide on place-based pilots. It had been agreed to focus on Thurso and the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport as the areas where the Natural Capital Tool could best be demonstrated as a decision-making tool to support achievement of the cross-cutting themes within the HOIP, and the next step would be communication and engagement with the relevant Community Partnerships.

In relation to item 5 on the Action Tracker, a covering report and draft Indicator Report on Health Inequalities had been circulated. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to discuss them at today’s meeting. However, the Chair suggested that partners review the reports and provide contributions to further refine the dashboard to the Director of Public Health, and that the final version be brought to the December Board.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the Action Tracker and the updates provided;
- ii. **AGREED** that the actions marked as “completed” be removed;
- iii. **AGREED** that the timeframe for the report in respect of the Active Highland Partnership Group be extended to the December Board; and
- iv. **AGREED** that partners review the reports on health inequalities and provide contributions to further refine the dashboard to the Director of Public Health, and that the final version be brought to the December Board.

5. The Population Health Framework

The Chair of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership declared a connection to this item as a Non-Executive Director of Public Health Scotland. However, there was no conflict of interest.

Jennifer Davies, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland, and Mark McAllister, Organisational Lead for Strategic Development, Public Health Scotland, gave a presentation on the Population Health Framework (PHF), during which information was provided on the significant health challenges Scotland faced; the building blocks of health in terms of social and economic factors, health behaviours, health services and physical environment; the need for reform; and how the PHF fit with wider reform and other key documents, namely, the NHS Scotland Operational Improvement Plan and the Health and Social Care Service Renewal Framework 2025-2035.

An overview of the PHF was provided, including the vision and aim, initial priorities and actions, drivers of health, and guiding principles, and Board Members were asked to consider what they saw as the role of the CPP in delivering the PHF; what, if anything, was preventing progress being made in improving population health; and what the key enablers would be to deliver the ambition set out in the PHF.

A detailed discussion took place, during which the following main points were raised:

- it was requested that the presentation slides be circulated to Board Members and attendees;
- the extent to which the third sector had been consulted on what was envisaged in the suite of documents referred to in the presentation was questioned. It was suggested there was still work to be done in terms of engaging with stakeholders, and information was sought, and provided, on the plans in that regard, during which it was commented that some of that work needed to be guided and driven by local systems;
- whilst national bodies could provide valuable input from a policy perspective, they were not necessarily aware of the reality on the ground for local groups;
- some organisations had different interpretations of what preventative activity was, and it was essential, when talking about whole-system change, to ensure there was a shared understanding;
- as indicated in the presentation, social and economic factors had a significant impact on health, and there was a stark difference in life expectancy between the most and least deprived areas. Whilst job opportunities in Highland were plentiful there were skills shortages across various sectors, and a fundamental issue for the CPP was how to get people in the most deprived communities into employment and create better incomes and standards of living;
- there was an opportunity to use the PHF to inform a targeted intervention or project that could be tracked to see what impact it was having on outcomes for those who were most excluded and how partnership practice might be changed going forward;
- working with families, parents and carers was key to developing understanding and better habits around health. It was confirmed there was a particular focus on that in terms of the metrics of what success would look like, and the Organisational Lead for Strategic Development undertook to share the work taking place in that regard;
- information was sought, and provided, on how the PHF dovetailed with the Physical Activity for Health Framework, where sport and physical activity sat within the PHF action plan and how it was intended to address barriers to accessing sport and physical activity, which was a significant issue in deprived or remote and rural communities. The Chair added that it would be powerful for the Board to consider how sport and physical activity needed to be delivered in Highland;

- access to green space was an enabler in terms of physical activity and the themes in respect of early intervention and healthy weight. However, there was inequality of access to green space across Highland, and the role of the Green Health Partnership in that regard was highlighted;
- the importance of alignment between the HOIP and the PHF was emphasised, and it was reassuring to see that there was activity taking place across the CPP and by individual organisations that addressed the initial actions in the PHF. It would be helpful to consider whether there were any gaps, both at Highland and local level, and local public health profiles would be useful for Community Partnerships to identify whether there were any variations that it might be necessary to focus on in terms of priorities. The PHF would also be a useful tool as the CPP started the process of the next iteration of the HOIP;
- it would be an interesting exercise to consider how the PHF applied to Highland, both in terms of the challenges that existed in the region and the opportunities and assets;
- it was necessary to drive the PHF down through Community Partnerships to a grassroots level, whilst also pulling up from them;
- the need to focus on inequality to drive it down was emphasised;
- one of the reasons the approach set out in the PHF had not been successful previously was that a highly responsive NHS, which is what staff and the public demanded, was extremely resource-hungry, and NHS Highland was committed to looking at what it needed to do differently to achieve the desired outcomes and change the trajectory of the graph in the presentation which showed the projected exponential increase in expenditure on health; and
- based on the 2022 Census, it was projected that, over the next 20 years in Highland, there would be a 70% increase in the number of people over the age of 75 and a 20% reduction in those age 0-15. To enable public sector reform in a rural area the size of Highland, it was questioned what the Scottish Government was prepared to do to support system change in order that population issues and health inequalities could be addressed, and it was suggested a follow-up conversation was needed in that regard. Further discussion ensued on the depopulation challenges in some parts of Highland, the associated impact in terms of the delivery of public services, and the need to align population approaches across government, and it was suggested that the latter point be raised at Scottish Government level by the Scottish Government Place Director. The Chair suggested that, going forward, the CPP identify those areas where it was considered a different approach was needed and feed that back.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;
- ii. **AGREED** that the slides be circulated to Board Members and attendees; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the need to align population approaches across government be raised at Scottish Government level.

6. 2024-2025 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/17/25 by the Partnership Development Manager and CPP Senior Officers.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- thanks were expressed to officers for their efforts in producing the Annual Report, which was a significant step forward and demonstrated the amount of work taking place across the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). However, it was suggested that some of the activity might have happened had the CPP not been in place and, going forward, it was necessary to do more to clearly articulate where the CPP added value;
- in relation to the Prosperity strategic priority, it was suggested that mention be made of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership and the work that had been done around regional economic opportunities. Particular reference was made to the significant amount of renewables investment coming to the region, as well as activity in the space sector;
- it having been highlighted that the Annual Report would be presented to the Full Council in October 2025, it was commented that all partner organisations should be aware of the work of the CPP, and the Annual Report presented an opportunity to raise the profile of the CPP and encourage staff to think about partnership work as being core to what they did;
- for future Annual Reports, it was suggested that consideration be given to producing a one-page high-level version that could be shared to promote the work of the CPP;
- attention was drawn to the update on the Highland Property Partnership, which was critical to affecting meaningful change going forward, and a plea was made for continued commitment from partners; and
- it was questioned how the work of the nine local Community Partnerships informed the work of the Board, and whether it was necessary to raise the visibility of Community Partnerships at Board level, either through inclusion in a future Annual Report or by separate means. The Partnership Development Manager explained that examples of the work of Community Partnerships had been included in the Annual Report. Going forward, it was intended to implement a system of Community Partnerships creating individual Annual Reports which would feed into the next HOIP Annual Report. The Chair undertook to liaise with the Partnership Development Manager as to how the work of Community Partnerships could be reported to the Board in the interim.

The Board:

- i. **APPROVED** the 2024-2025 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Annual Report at Appendix 1 of the report, subject to a mention of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership and the work that had been done around regional economic opportunities; and
- ii. **AGREED** that, for future Annual Reports, consideration be given to producing a one-page high-level version that could be shared to promote the work of the CPP.

7. Highland Poverty and Equality Commission

Apologies were intimated on behalf of the Co-Chairs of the Highland Poverty and Equality Commission, who were unable to attend today's meeting, and it was explained that the intention was they would attend the December meeting of the Board to provide an update on the work of the Commission.

The Council's Chief Officer – Housing and Communities then gave a presentation during which information was provided on the background to the establishment of the independent Commission; the Co-Chairs and Members; the role of Commissioners; the aims of the Commission; the first meeting in Balintore; the six thematic areas of focus and the

associated thematic sounding boards and evidence sessions; and the approach to gathering evidence. It was explained that the Commission reported directly to the Council, and a final report providing recommendations for action, change and transformation would be shared with the Council on 25 June 2026. Updates would also be provided to the CPP Board.

The Council Leader and Chief Executive also spoke to the establishment of the Commission, which would build a real picture of what poverty looked like in Highland and gather rich qualitative data that could be drawn upon by the Council and the CPP in terms of future planning and decision-making.

A detailed discussion took place during which the Commission and the opportunity it presented for the CPP in terms of informing the next iteration of the HOIP were welcomed, and information was sought, and provided, regarding bringing in lived experience, particularly how it was intended to reach those the Commission wanted to hear from and the timescale for gathering evidence. In relation to the latter, it was commented that it was necessary to consider how not to make meaningful connection with those with lived experience time limited. The Director of Public Health having spoken to her previous experience of establishing the Swansea Poverty Truth Commission, it was suggested it would be beneficial for her to have an early discussion with the Chairs of the Commission.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

8. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Service Delivery Review Update

Declaration of Interest: The Chief Officer, HTSI, declared an interest in this item as a Board Member of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Group Commander Karla Stevenson, SFRS, provided a verbal update on the SFRS Service Delivery Review, during which it was explained that a public consultation had been carried out on potential changes to more than 30 Fire Stations, three of which were in Highland. The three stations in question - Nethy Bridge, Ratagan and Muck – had not been operational for a number of years. The consultation, which had run for 12 weeks, had closed on 18 September 2025. 40 public meetings had taken place in communities across Scotland and over 3500 responses had been received to the consultation survey, and thanks were expressed to everyone that had been involved. The next step was to review and analyse the responses and consider the operational evidence gathered, and this process would be overseen by an independent external research organisation, the Diffley Partnership. Thereafter, a consultation report summarising the findings would be prepared, and recommendations would be made to the SFRS Board in December 2025.

The Chair expressed thanks for the update and suggested that a more in-depth discussion on the issues associated with the review take place at a future meeting.

The Board **NOTED** the position, and that further updates would be provided as the review progressed.

9. Highland Community Justice Partnership: Revised Terms of Reference and Annual Return 2024-25

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/18/25 by the Highland Community Justice Partnership Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- thanks were expressed to Kevin Flett, Community Justice Partnership Manager, for his work in producing the Annual Return;
- the proposed use of Fit Homes technology to support tenants who had been involved with the justice system was welcomed;
- in response to a question, it was explained that progress had been made in terms of partner engagement and commitment at an operational level. There were systemic issues with some national key players but the position had improved, particularly in respect of links with the judiciary; and
- on the point being raised, the Chair of the Community Justice Partnership undertook to explore whether there was merit in linking in with Community Partnerships or other existing local structures in relation to the stated challenge in terms of ensuring consistent service delivery throughout Highland, particularly in remote communities.

The Board **APPROVED**:

- i. the Highland Community Justice Partnership Terms of Reference (revised June 2025); and
- ii. the Highland Community Justice Partnership Annual Return 2024-25 for submission to Community Justice Scotland.

10. Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) Draft Annual Report 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/19/25 by the HADP Coordinator.

In introducing the report, it was highlighted that the Annual Report included infographics which illustrated the higher prevalence of drug-related and alcohol-specific deaths in the most deprived areas. Reference was also made to the provision of maternity comfort packs, a small but impactful intervention which had been introduced following feedback from hospital staff who had identified instances of women arriving to give birth without any personal items. The Chair of the HADP undertook to liaise with officers regarding how such information could be shared with the Poverty Commission.

Thanks were expressed to Eve MacLeod, HADP Coordinator, for her work in producing the Annual Report, the visual presentation of which, particularly the infographics and the clear display of progress against MAT (Medication Assisted Treatment) Standards, was commended.

The Board **NOTED** the HADP annual report 2024/25 before publication online.

11. HADP Draft Strategic Plan 2025/26-2029/30

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/20/25 by the Chair of the HADP.

In introducing the report, attention was drawn to the alignment of the Strategic Plan with the HOIP, and advice was sought as to whether a climate or environmental impact assessment should be undertaken. It was also highlighted that the equalities impact assessment had not yet been completed, and adjustments to the Plan might be required thereafter. In addition,

updated national figures on alcohol-specific deaths were expected later in the month and would be incorporated prior to publication.

It was confirmed that a climate and environmental impact assessment should be carried out in line with the Board's previous commitment, and the Head of Operations – North, NatureScot undertook to provide support in that regard. The Strategic Plan was commended, particularly the "Plan on a Page", and the Chair requested that the final version be circulated to Board Members when it was available. It was also suggested that consideration be given to how best to share the Plan across partner networks.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the alignment with the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) processes as summarised in section 3 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** that CPP support be provided in relation to climate and environmental impacts, and that this be coordinated by the Head of Operations – North, NatureScot;
- iii. **APPROVED** the HADP Strategic Plan 2025/26-2029/30 for publication online after two updates had been completed, namely, the updated figures on alcohol-related deaths in 2024 which would be published imminently, and any further adjustments required from impact assessment (equalities and climate/environment); and
- iv. **AGREED** that the final version of the Strategic Plan be circulated to Board Members when it was available.

12. Highland Public Protection Chief Officers Group (HPPCOG) Annual Report 2024-2025

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/21/25 by the Chair of the HPPCOG.

In introducing the report, it was highlighted that the Annual Report was in draft form and partners could provide feedback outwith the meeting if they so wished.

The opportunity to review the Annual Report and the breadth of responsibilities covered by the HPPCOG having been welcomed, the Board **NOTED**:

- i. the progress of the work of the Committees and Partnerships that reported to the Highland Public Protection Chief Officer Group;
- ii. the risks to delivery of the public protection agenda;
- iii. the priorities for future action; and
- iv. that the Annual Report was in draft form and partners could provide feedback outwith the meeting.

13. Partnership Development Team Year 2 Report and Quarterly Update: June to August 2025

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/22/25 by the Partnership Development Manager and CPP Senior Officers.

The volume of work undertaken by the small team was commended, and appreciation was expressed for the contribution made across many different areas with limited resource.

In relation to the Third Sector Engagement Outline Plan, it was confirmed that engagement had already taken place with the Highland Third Sector Interface, and the proposed approach was endorsed.

The Board:

- i. **NOTED** the Year 2 Report at Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the 2025 Third Sector Engagement Outline Plan at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the updated Year 2 Milestones at Appendix 3 of the report.

14. Strategic Risk Register

The Partnership Development Manager provided a verbal update on the review of the Strategic Risk Register. It was reported that, following the June Board meeting, she had met with Liz Humphreys, Non-Executive Director, NHS Highland, who had offered support in this area, to discuss the proposed format of the revised register.

It was further reported that several partners had nominated representatives to join the subgroup proposed at the June meeting. A meeting had been scheduled in October, following the school holidays. Work would continue in the background, with the intention of presenting the revised format to the December Board for approval.

The Board **NOTED** the update, and that the revised Strategic Risk Register would be presented to the December Board for approval.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 5 December 2025 at 10.00 am.

The meeting ended at 12.02 pm.