

Agenda Item	10
Report No	CP/13/26

## The Highland Council

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 21 May 2026

**Report Title:** Highland Outcome Improvement Plan - Update

**Report By:** Assistant Chief Executive - Place

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The 2024 - 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) is the strategic plan for the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP), setting out shared priorities to tackle inequalities and maximise opportunities through a strategic focus on People, Place and Prosperity.
- 1.2 The Council considered and noted the first Annual Report on progress against the refreshed HOIP at its meeting in October 2025. In line with the agreed reporting arrangements, this report provides a six-monthly update to the Communities and Place Committee on progress since that time.
- 1.3 This update draws on matters considered by the CPP Board since October 2025 and provides Members with assurance on the continued delivery of the 2024 – 2027 HOIP Delivery Plan, highlights key areas of progress, identifies any emerging challenges and next steps.
- 1.4 Overall, delivery of the HOIP remains on track, with Council activity continuing to align strongly with partnership priorities, particularly in relation to place-based working, tackling inequality, and community empowerment.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
  - i. Note the progress update on delivery of the 2024–2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan.

### 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - There are no new resource implications arising from the report. The revised HOIP aligns to the strategic priorities of partner agencies, including

the Council's Delivery Plan and, therefore, enables greater and more effective alignment of partnership resources in order to deliver against the priorities and actions identified.

- 3.2 **Legal** - Community Planning Partnerships have a duty to develop a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan that must address inequality.
- 3.3 **Risk** - The current financial challenges facing the public and third sectors was a key driver in resetting the HOIP. It is essential to redesign approaches to maximise the opportunities from the resources available and reduce duplication. It is essential that partnership and organisational priorities and resources are aligned to maximise opportunities and mitigate risks of reductions.
- 3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no health and safety implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 **Gaelic** - The revised HOIP includes an additional outcome to support communities to maximise opportunities from Gaelic culture and heritage.

## 4 Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

## 5 Background

- 5.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Community Planning Partnerships to prepare and deliver a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan focused on tackling inequality.
- 5.2 The refreshed [2024 - 2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan](#) was agreed in June 2024, with a supporting Delivery Plan approved by the CPP Board in September 2024.
- 5.3 The 2024 - 2027 HOIP is structured around three strategic priorities:
  - **People** – enabling individuals to live independently, safely and well
  - **Place** – building sustainable and resilient communities through place-based approaches
  - **Prosperity** – supporting inclusive economic growth and opportunity

- 5.4 An Annual Report on progress is presented to Council each October, with a six-monthly update provided to the Communities and Place Committee to support ongoing Member oversight.

## **6 Progress Since October 2025**

### **6.1 Strategic Progress Update**

Since the Annual Report was presented to Council, the CPP Board has continued to provide strategic oversight of delivery across the 2024 – 2027 HOIP priorities. Key areas of progress since October 2025 include:

- Continued advancement of partnership activity across the 2024 -2027 HOIP cross-cutting themes, particularly those most relevant to place-based service delivery and community resilience
- Further embedding of partnership governance and delivery arrangements, moving from initial set-up to business-as-usual delivery
- Alignment of CPP activity with emerging regional and national policy developments where relevant

### **6.2 Place-Based and Communities-Focused Activity**

Progress continues to be made in strengthening place-based working across Highland, including:

- Ongoing support to Community Partnerships to align local priorities with the 2024 – 2027 HOIP
- Continued emphasis on community empowerment, collaboration and local decision-making
- Improved consistency of approach across local areas, supported by shared tools and frameworks

- 6.3 The CPP Board continues to use the 2024–2027 HOIP Performance Framework to monitor impact at a population level. While indicators largely reflect long-term trends, they provide an important basis for:

- Identifying areas where outcomes are improving or stabilising
- Highlighting issues requiring further targeted attention
- Supporting evidence-led decision-making across the partnership

At this stage, there are no significant concerns that would indicate a material risk to the delivery of the HOIP.

## **7 Progress Against the 2024–2027 HOIP Delivery Plan**

- 7.1 The 2024 – 2027 HOIP Delivery Plan translates the shared vision and strategic priorities of the 2024 – 2027 HOIP into coordinated partnership activity. It is structured around seven cross-cutting themes, each designed to deliver impact across more than one strategic priority (People, Place and Prosperity) and to address the interdependencies that underpin inequality and community resilience.

- 7.2 This section provides an update on key progress since October 2025, focusing on activity that has continued to develop, mature, or embed since the Annual Report was presented to Council. The update reflects matters considered through the CPP Board and its associated governance and delivery structures.

### 7.3 **Connecting People and Places**

Progress has continued in strengthening partnership approaches to place-based service delivery and more effective use of shared assets. Key areas of progress include:

- The ongoing work of the Highland Property Partnership, which continues to provide a strategic forum for coordinating public sector property interests and identifying opportunities for co-location, joint working, and service redesign.
- Continued alignment with the Highland Investment Plan, supporting integrated approaches to service delivery in local areas and reinforcing the connection between physical infrastructure, access to services, and community sustainability.
- Further development of shared approaches to mapping assets and services, improving the evidence base for place-based planning and investment decisions.

This work supports improved access to services, more efficient use of public assets, and stronger integration of service delivery at a local level.

### 7.4 **Whole Family and Community-Based Approaches**

Activity under this theme continues to focus on prevention, early intervention, and tackling inequality through coordinated, whole-system approaches. Key areas of progress include:

- Continued development and application of a health inequalities informed approach, supporting more targeted action and better alignment of partnership effort with identified need. The Short Life Working Group is currently consulting on the Health Inequalities Indicators Report.
- Ongoing work to progress innovative and flexible models of childcare and care delivery in rural and remote communities, recognising the critical role these services play in supporting families, workforce participation, and community sustainability.
- Strengthened collaboration across statutory and third sector partners to support whole-family wellbeing and community-based support models.
- The Whole Family Wellbeing Programme remains a key delivery vehicle for this theme, supporting joined-up, preventative action across statutory and third-sector partners and providing assurance that whole-family, place-based approaches are being embedded in practice.

This theme remains central to the focus on reducing inequalities and improving outcomes across the life course.

### 7.5 **Employment and Employability**

Partnership work under the Employment and Employability theme continues to focus on improving access to work, supporting workforce development, and responding to both current and future skills needs. Key areas of progress include:

- Continued delivery of coordinated employability support through partnership arrangements, improving clarity of pathways for individuals and employers.
- Ongoing collaboration between partners to understand emerging labour market pressures and opportunities, particularly in the context of wider economic change and investment across Highland.
- Further alignment of employability activity with other HOIP priorities, including housing and childcare, recognising the interdependencies that shape access to work.

This work supports inclusive growth and helps ensure that opportunities benefit people and communities across Highland.

## 7.6 **Community Wealth Building**

Community Wealth Building remains a core mechanism for delivering inclusive economic outcomes and tackling inequality. Key areas of progress include:

- Continued embedding of Community Wealth Building principles across partnership activity, including alignment with the Council's Community Wealth Building Strategy.
- Progress in relation to the implementation of the Highland Social Value Charter and Employer Charter, promoting fair work, local supply chains, and community benefit.
- Ongoing development of mechanisms to better align investment, procurement, and funding decisions to maximise benefit for local communities.

This theme supports long-term economic resilience and ensures that wealth generated in Highland contributes to improved local outcomes.

## 7.7 **Housing**

Housing continues to be recognised as a critical enabler across the HOIP, underpinning outcomes related to people, place, and prosperity. Key areas of progress include:

- Continued partnership delivery of actions aligned with the Highland Housing Challenge, including work to improve understanding of housing need and demand.
- Ongoing collaboration to strengthen the role of public sector land, assets, and investment in supporting housing delivery.
- Progress in developing approaches that support key worker housing, community-led housing models, and long-term community sustainability.

Housing remains a priority cross-cutting theme due to its fundamental role in tackling inequality and supporting thriving communities.

## 7.8 **Shared Approaches to Commissioning**

Work under this theme continues to focus on improving how partners align resources and commission services around shared outcomes. Key areas of progress include:

- Continued exploration of opportunities for shared and simplified commissioning approaches where this can add value.
- Improved dialogue across partners regarding alignment of outcomes, funding streams, and priorities, particularly in areas of preventative and community-based support.
- Recognition of the importance of proportionate and flexible approaches to commissioning in rural and remote contexts.

This theme supports more effective use of limited resources and reduces duplication across the partnership.

## 7.9 **Aligning Partnership Practices**

(Funding Alignment, Data and Intelligence, and Workforce Development)

Progress continues in strengthening the foundations that enable effective partnership working. Key areas of progress include:

- Ongoing work to improve the alignment of funding opportunities and priorities across partners, helping communities and local delivery partnerships to access and coordinate funding more effectively.
- Continued development of shared approaches to data and intelligence, improving the Partnership's ability to understand need, monitor progress, and take evidence-led decisions.
- Further progress in developing shared partnership practices, including workforce development and strengthening understanding of community planning roles and responsibilities.

These activities support consistency, quality improvement, and long-term effectiveness across the CPP.

- 7.10 As part of work to strengthen partnership practice and workforce development, Members of the Communities and Place Committee participated in piloting the new Community Planning Induction Module. The CPP would like to thank Members for their engagement and feedback, which has informed final refinements ahead of the formal launch of the module in May 2026.
- 7.11 Overall, progress against the 2024–2027 HOIP Delivery Plan remains on track. Partnership activity continues to mature, with increasing emphasis on embedding approaches, strengthening alignment, and learning from delivery. While the operating context remains challenging, the Delivery Plan continues to provide a clear framework for coordinated action to tackle inequality and support communities across Highland.

## **8 Emerging Risks and Challenges**

- 8.1 While overall progress remains positive, partners continue to operate in a challenging context. Key issues highlighted through CPP Board discussions include:
- Capacity and workforce pressures across public and third sector partners
  - Financial constraints, limiting the ability to scale or accelerate some activity
  - The ongoing importance of maintaining strong engagement and alignment across a wide and complex partnership landscape
- 8.2 These risks are being kept under review by the CPP Board, with an emphasis on prioritisation, intervention and prevention, and maximising the impact of collective effort and resources.

## **9 General Updates**

- 9.1 The CPP structure continues to support delivery of the 2024–2027 HOIP. Ongoing review of delivery and governance arrangements is helping to ensure that partnership structures remain aligned with the HOIP strategic priorities and are proportionate, effective, and focused on delivery. Since the last update, the partnership has strengthened its delivery through the establishment of a CPP Board Strategic Risk Register Sub-Group, providing additional focus on priority issues and enhancing the Board's oversight of strategic risk.
- 9.2 Delivery Groups and thematic partnerships continue to progress activity aligned to the HOIP cross-cutting themes. These groups play a key role in translating strategic priorities into practical action and ensuring alignment between national policy, partnership priorities, and local delivery. Since the last update, two new Short Life

Working Groups have been established to take forward time-limited focused priority areas.

- 9.3 All nine Community Partnerships remain active and continue to meet quarterly, supported by the Partnership Development Team. Community Partnerships are increasingly embedding the HOIP's People, Place and Prosperity priorities within their local action planning, strengthening place-based working, local collaboration, and community engagement.
- 9.4 The CPP Annual Conference remains a key mechanism for strengthening shared understanding, collaboration, and learning across partners and communities. Planning is underway for future engagement activity that will build on previous events, reflecting emerging priorities and supporting preparation for the next phase of community planning.
- 9.5 The Partnership Development Team continues to play a central role in enabling effective community planning across Highland. The Team supports Community Partnerships, partnership governance, and delivery of HOIP priorities, helping to build capacity, consistency, and alignment across the wider partnership landscape.
- 9.6 The CPP continues to engage with improvement activity to strengthen partnership working and delivery. Learning from delivery and governance is being used to inform ongoing activity and to support future planning, including early thinking around the development of the next 10 year HOIP.

## **10 Relevance to the Communities and Place Committee**

- 10.1 The Communities and Place Committee have a key role in providing assurance on partnership activity that contributes to:
- Place-based approaches to service delivery
  - Tackling inequality and supporting vulnerable communities
  - Strengthening community capacity and resilience
  - Aligning Council priorities with wider partnership activity
- 10.2 This update demonstrates continued alignment between the HOIP and the Council's strategic objectives, reinforcing the value of community planning as a mechanism for achieving shared outcomes.

## **11 Next Steps**

- 11.1 The CPP Board will continue to oversee delivery of the 2024 – 2027 HOIP Delivery Plan through to 2027.
- 11.2 The next Annual Report on progress against the 2024 – 2027 HOIP will be presented to Council in October 2026.
- 11.3 Alongside ongoing delivery, early preparatory work will continue during 2026 to inform the development of the next 10 year Highland Outcome Improvement Plan, 2027 - 2037, building on learning from the current plan.

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Background Papers: None  
Appendices: None