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 Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 2.00 pm.

Present:

The Highland Council:
Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chair of Communities and Place Committee
Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People (substitute)

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:
Temporary Chief Superintendent Dave Ross (substitute)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service:
Lynne Gow, Area Commander and Local Senior Officer

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:
Kenny Steele, Chair of HTSI Board

NatureScot:
Graham Neville, Head of Operations - North

Skills Development Scotland:
Roddy Bailey, Area Manager

University of the Highlands and Islands:
Lorna Walker, Chief Operating Officer (substitute)

In attendance:
Fiona Duncan, Chief Officer - Health and Social Care, The Highland Council
Arlene Johnstone, Chief Officer – Highland Health and Social Care, NHS Highland
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Strategic Group
Judy Hill, Chair, Community Safety and Resilience Delivery Group
Cathy Steer, Chair, Mental Health and Wellbeing Delivery Group
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group
James Maybee, Chair, Community Justice Partnership
Carron McDiarmid, Chair, Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership
Gail Prince, Partnership Development Manager
Melanie Murray, Principal Committee Officer, The Highland Council

Also in attendance:
Paul Reid, Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management, The Highland Council
Karen Chisholm, Future Operating Model Programme Manager, The Highland Council
Gail Anderton, Community Benefits 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 Raymond Bremner, Derek Brown, Chief Superintendent Rob Shepherd, Ranald Robertson and Vicki Nairn.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Minutes of Meetings

The Board:

i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Community Planning Partnership Board – 5 December 2025;
ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership Strategic Group – 10 September 2025; and
iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 18 November 2025.

4. Action Tracker

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

In relation to the Health Inequalities dashboard, the Partnership Development Manager confirmed that engagement activity was underway. The Head of Health Improvement, NHS Highland, had attended a recent meeting of the Partnership Coordinating Group, and the Director of Public Health was scheduled to present at the CPP Conference in May.

Due to technical issues, it was suggested that the Director of Public Health provide an update on the action relating to the Population Health Framework outwith the meeting so that the Action Tracker could be updated accordingly.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the Action Tracker; and
ii. **AGREED** that the Director of Public Health provide an update to the Partnership Development Manager on the action relating to the Population Health Framework so that the Action Tracker could be updated accordingly.

5. Future Operating Model Programme Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/1/26 by the Future Operating Model Programme Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- it was reassuring that the Future Operating Model reflected feedback from communities regarding more effective and sensible use of resources in response to community needs;
- information was sought, and provided, on whether there were any areas of resistance or challenge, whether any specific risks to delivery had been identified, and whether partnership working and engagement were being maximised;
- questions were raised regarding what success would look like and how it would be evaluated, including in terms of return on investment. In response, the Programme Manager explained that the Future Operating Model would be measured against an assessment framework, which could be shared with partners. The Assistant Chief Executive – People added that the Future Operating Model was about decentralising services, engaging with and listening to communities and stakeholders, and developing the model accordingly, and success would be delivering what communities had said they wanted. It was also an opportunity to reduce duplication and free up resources by sharing services, as many partners were undertaking similar back-office functions. It was emphasised that there was no preconceived blueprint, and that there was still an opportunity for people to feed into the model;
- the importance of parity of voice, and of raising awareness of the Future Operating Model Programme throughout partners' extensive networks, was emphasised, and the Chair suggested that it would be helpful for the Programme Manager's contact details to be circulated so that partners could make contact on any relevant matters;
- the Chair suggested that a further progress report, including reflections on the points raised during discussion, be presented to a future meeting so that the Board could see how matters had developed; and
- the Council's Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management expanded on the benefits of a shared services approach and provided examples of potential opportunities, including the sharing of logistics networks, stores networks and assets. Whilst discussions around sharing services had taken place for a number of years, these had had not yet materialised. It was important to get an initiative over the line in order to change the dynamic and the culture, and a plea was made to partners to engage with the project. It was added that, once some initiatives had been implemented, it would be important to celebrate successes and communicate these to stakeholders.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the progress to date of the Future Operating Model Programme;
ii. **NOTED** the next steps;

iii. **AGREED** that the assessment framework in respect of the Future Operating Model, and the Programme Manager's contact details, be circulated to Community Planning Board Members and attendees; and
iv. **AGREED** that a further progress report be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

6. 2024-2027 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) Delivery Plan Progress Report – Community Wealth Building including Social Value Charter

There had been circulated joint Report No CPPB/2/26 by the Community Benefits Manager and Service Lead Economy and Regeneration, Highland Council.

In introducing the report, the Community Benefits Manager emphasised that the Social Value Charter was not solely a Council initiative and asked that any partners actively engaging with developers bear the Charter in mind and promote engagement with the Community Wealth Building team with a view to developers entering into partnership agreements and setting out a clear commitment as to what they could contribute to Highland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the re-established Community Wealth Building Partnership Group would establish a baseline, and that potential metrics to measure the impact of the collective effort could be brought to the Board for discussion at a later date;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding how the statutory Community Wealth Building Plan would be taken forward, and the associated timescale; and the staffing resource within the Council to support communities around community benefit, and whether it was considered to be sufficient given the amount of renewable energy development taking place;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the proposed increase in community benefit value from £5,000 to £6,000 per megawatt per year was significantly lower than expected, and this would be reflected in the CPP response to the Scottish Government's request for feedback on the Good Practice Principles. In relation to whether there would be any community benefit arising from the significant amount of investment in pump storage hydropower, mainly in the Great Glen, it was explained that Pump Storage Hydropower had not been specified within the proposals, and this had been identified as a risk as it created ambiguity;
- the Scottish Government's refreshed guidance did not go far enough for communities and did not align with the principles set out in the Social Value Charter. Community benefit should not be voluntary and legislative change was required, and it was important that this was reflected robustly in the CPP's response to the Scottish Government;
- as work progressed, it would be necessary to consider the links between community wealth building and what the CPP wanted to achieve in terms of addressing inequality;
- with reference to previous contributions regarding the need for equity, it was highlighted that the purpose of the Social Value Charter was to achieve equity of investment and legacy across Highland;
- in relation to the Employer Charter, the focus on Fair Work was welcomed and was expected to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing, including health inequalities. On the point being raised, the Assistant Chief Executive – People undertook to explore whether there was scope for more general workplace health initiatives in and around the Employer Charter. The Head of Health Improvement

offered support in that regard, highlighting that the Health Improvement team had considerable experience of workplace health initiatives;

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the £62m of funding committed by SSEN Transmission, to be distributed through a Regional Fund and Local Funds, was expected to be delivered between now and 2030. Further detail on the anticipated timescales could be circulated to partners. The position beyond 2030 was not yet known, although it was hoped that the funds would continue to grow as other developers came online;
- in relation to the proposed development of over 500 permanent homes, it was explained that all housing development would be subject to the usual planning process and matters such as impacts on services and infrastructure would be considered as part of that process;
- with regard to the proposed collective CPP response to the Scottish Government's request for feedback on the Good Practice Principles, the timescale for submission was very tight. It was explained that the intention was to respond on the same basis as in the previous year, emphasising the key points, particularly the lack of alignment with the Social Value Charter, and incorporating any additional points raised during discussion. The draft response would be circulated to Board Members for comment prior to submission; and
- in response to a question regarding the commissioning of external legal support to develop and appraise governance models in respect of the Strategic Investment Fund, it was explained that initial legal advice had been received and would be discussed with partners over the coming months. The intention was that formal proposals would be brought to the June Board for consideration and agreement. The approach outlined was welcomed.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the update relating to the Community Wealth Building (Scotland) Act 2026, and requirements of the Community Wealth Building Partnership Group to progress the duties within the act;
ii. **NOTED** progress with Social Value Charter activity;
iii. **NOTED** the update on the Scottish Government's Guidance refresh in relation to the Good Practice Principles for Community Benefits from Onshore Renewable Energy;
iv. **AGREED** that a collective CPP response be submitted in response to the Scottish Government's request for feedback on the Good Practice Principles; and
v. **AGREED** that information be circulated to partners on the anticipated timescales in respect of the £62m of funding committed by SSEN Transmission to be distributed through a Regional Fund and Local Funds.

7. Highland Children and Young People's Needs Assessment 2026

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/3/26 by the Chair of the Integrated Children's Services Planning Board. The appendices to the report had been circulated separately as Booklet A.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- information was sought, and provided, regarding how the Children and Young People's Needs Assessment (CYPNA) and the Integrated Children's Services Board Voice Report would be communicated to ensure that partners and stakeholders could make full use of the rich data contained within them; and on the governance route for approval of the Integrated Children's Services Plan;

- the data within the CYPNA and Voice Report could be used in a number of ways, including to inform the development of the new HOIP and the work of the Poverty Commission, and it would be important to continue to refer back to it;
- as indicated in the report, rural deprivation was less visible in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, and it was queried whether any work was underway in terms of how to articulate rural deprivation and rural challenges in a way that was easily understood. Detailed discussion ensued, during which reference was made to discussions at the recent CPP Development Day regarding the importance of viewing priorities through different lenses. It was suggested that "rural" was one such lens, and that different approaches might be required in a rural context. It was further commented that, even where there were established measures, issues such as homelessness could be hidden in rural communities. Highland was unique in the UK in terms of its level of remoteness and rurality, and it was suggested that it could lead the way in developing complementary approaches to statistical methods to better articulate issues of space and place, and that support could potentially be drawn from a national agency such as Public Health Scotland; and
- with reference to the charts on page 13 of the CYPNA, concern was expressed regarding the projected continuing decline in the number of children and young people in Highland, which was a significant challenge and raised a range of issues in relation to the future labour force and economy. It was queried how this compared to other parts of Scotland and what actions could be taken to help reverse the trend. Detailed discussion ensued on declining birth rates and depopulation, during which it was recognised that some aspects were beyond the remit of the CPP, and a broader conversation was needed. Reference was made to the Scottish Government's action plan to address depopulation, which some partners had been closely involved in, and the work being undertaken by a range of partners to try to encourage people to see Highland as a place to settle and bring up a family. It was suggested that there might be merit in considering what partners were doing individually in order to build a clearer picture of the collective activity that made a difference. The Chair concurred and suggested that the matter be discussed at a future development session, and that the new HOIP presented an opportunity to articulate the issue from a Highland perspective, which could then inform future lobbying activity.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the findings of the draft Highland Children and Young People's Needs Assessment 2026 and the evidence and themes from the draft Integrated Children's Services Board Voice Report;
ii. **AGREED** to endorse the Children and Young People's Needs Assessment and the themes from the Integrated Children's Services Board Voice Report as the evidence base for the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2026–2029; and
iii. **AGREED** to support the next steps including data-improvement work and publication of a summary version.

8. Place Based Framework Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/4/26 by the Chief Officer- Housing and Communities, Highland Council.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the extent to which individual partner organisations were engaging with or utilising the Place Based Framework in terms of their own work; and the connectivity between Area Place Plans and the overall HOIP. In relation to the latter, it was explained that alignment between the work taking place at a strategic level and what was happening at community level had been a challenge since the inception of the HOIP and, whilst improvements had been made, it was necessary to consider, as the new HOIP was developed, how to further strengthen that alignment.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the progress made across all 11 Area Place Plans as partnership-led frameworks guiding local priorities and investment.

9. CONTEST Board Annual Report

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/5/26 by Superintendent Judy Hill, Police Scotland.

During discussion, an update was sought, and provided, regarding the protest activity associated with the potential use of Cameron Barracks in Inverness to house asylum seekers. On the point being raised, it was explained that there were established processes in place around supporting Elected Members and Members of Parliament in the event of any security or safety concerns.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the contents of the report and Highland activity in relation to CONTEST.

10. Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (HADP) self-assessment process, results and next steps

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/6/26 by the Independent Chair of the HADP.

In introducing the report, the Chair of the HADP highlighted that the new Partnership Delivery Framework for Alcohol and Drugs Partnerships referred to in section 4.3 of the report had been published earlier that day. The HADP would review the framework and report back to the Board should any new actions be required.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that no actions to improve alignment between the HADP and the CPP Board had emerged from the survey other than those outlined in section 3.2 of the report. A number of CPP Board Members and attendees participated in the HADP Strategy Group, and continued engagement would help strengthen the connections between the two structures. The Chair of the CPP Board indicated her willingness to discuss any further opportunities to reinforce alignment outwith the meeting.

The Board **NOTED**, for assurance:

i. the results of the recent HADP self-assessment process; and
ii. the actions agreed to support improvement.

11. Scottish Government Update

The Scottish Government Place Director provided a verbal update, explaining that the Scottish Government had adopted a more deliberative and positive approach to Place Director roles and that, while the role remained voluntary, it was now better resourced. She reported that she had recently attended a session relating to the National Islands Plan, which had covered forthcoming work on data, evidence and funding. The Islands Team was led by Erica Clarkson, with Megan McWilliams acting as the link for Highland. She had also attended a session on data needs of Place Directors, and advised that she would discuss with the Partnership Development Manager what comparative place-based data would be most useful.

The Place Director went on to outline the arrangements for the forthcoming Scottish Parliament Election. It was explained that the pre-election period would begin in late March 2026, with the dissolution of Parliament scheduled for 9 April 2026 and polling day on 7 May 2026. Government business would move to an essential-only footing during this period and there would be a reduced visible ministerial presence. It was highlighted that the national count would take place on 8 May 2026 rather than overnight. Information was also provided on the processes followed by the Civil Service in advance of an election, including access for opposition parties to officials, the preparation of guidance, manifesto analysis, scenario planning for government formation and readiness to brief incoming ministers. The statutory timescales for the appointment of a First Minister and formation of a government were outlined, together with the likely timing of Cabinet appointments and the later establishment of parliamentary committees. It was emphasised that civil servants operated under strict propriety rules, including the need to maintain political impartiality, postpone decisions that could bind a future administration and ensure that public resources were not used for party-political purposes.

The Chair welcomed the update and expressed her appreciation of the positive developments in relation to the Place Director role, including the Place Director and CPP Charter. The engagement that had taken place with the Islands Team was also welcomed, and it was indicated that further discussion on the type of information that would best support engagement and strengthen links could take place later in the year, once the post-election period had concluded and portfolio responsibilities were clearer. The value of continued regular dialogue between the Place Director and the Partnership Development Manager, to ensure the CPP remained informed of national developments, was recognised.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the update.

12. Partnership Development Team Quarterly Report: December 2025 - February 2026

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/7/26 by the Partnership Development Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the Chair acknowledged and commended the substantial volume of work undertaken by the Partnership Development Team and encouraged partners to ensure that key dates, including the CPP Conference on 15 May 2026 and the next Board meeting on 12 June 2026, were included in diaries. It was also intended to hold a development session on the morning of 12 June 2026, details of which would be provided in due course;
- the draft Engagement Route Map for the 2027-2037 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) was welcomed as it clearly set out the timescales that would have to be adhered to deliver the new HOIP, which would require a significant amount of work by partners over the coming year; and
- concern was raised regarding declining attendance at Community Partnerships. Board Members were asked to emphasise, within their organisations, the importance of consistent attendance at Community Partnerships and other partnership groups to support effective community planning.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the Partnership Development Team’s quarterly progress for December 2025 to February 2026;

ii. **AGREED** the approach outlined for the development of the 2027-2037 Highland Outcome Improvement Plan;
iii. **AGREED** the Place Director Charter available at Appendix 4 of the report;
iv. **AGREED** the collation of a Highland CPP response to the National Performance Framework request; and
v. **AGREED** that Board Members disseminate, throughout their organisations, the importance of partner attendance and engagement at Community Partnerships and other partnership groups.

13. Strategic Risk Register

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/8/26 by the Partnership Development Manager.

The Chair thanked the Risk Register Sub-Group for the substantial amount of work that had been undertaken, highlighting that the Risk Register would continue to evolve through regular review, and that there were further discussions to be had in relation to risk appetite and how it should be used by the partnership going forward.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the Strategic Risk Register update as at March 2026 and the work undertaken by the Risk Sub-Group; and
ii. **AGREED** the revised approach to the CPP Strategic Risk Register, including the new Strategic Risk Appetite Statement and its application across all CPP strategic risks.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 12 June 2026 at 1.30 pm.

At this point, a query was raised, on behalf of the Chair of the Council's Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee, regarding the ownership of the Population Health Framework and whether this should sit with the CPP Board to ensure coordination of activity. In response, it was explained that, whilst the Framework was relevant to the CPP and the Board was sighted on it, ownership rested with individual partner organisations. It was suggested that this approach might need to be articulated more clearly, and it was confirmed that this would be taken on board.

The meeting ended at 4.10 pm.