Agenda Item 3i.

Highland Community Planning Partnership | Com-pàirteachas Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd na Gàidhealtachd

Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Partnership Board held in Committee Rooms 1 and 2, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 12 June 2026.

Present:

The Highland Council:
Councillor Raymond Bremner, Leader of the Council (remote)
Councillor Graham MacKenzie, Chair of the Communities and Place Committee
Derek Brown, Chief Executive

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE):
Stuart Black, Chief Executive (remote)
Eann Sinclair, Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland (also representing Caithness Community Partnership)

NHS Highland:
Sarah Compton-Bishop, Chair, NHS Highland Board
Jennifer Davies, Director of Public Health

Police Scotland:
Superintendent Judy Hill (substitute)

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

The Scottish Government:
Donna MacKinnon, Scottish Government Place Director (remote)

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

High Life Highland:
James Martin, Director of Community Leisure and Sport (substitute)

Highland Third Sector Interface:
Janet Miles, Chief Officer

Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Partnership (HITRANS):
Ranald Robertson, Partnership Director (remote)

NatureScot:
Graham Neville, Head of Operations - North

Skills Development Scotland:
Roddy Bailey, Area Manager

In attendance:
Kate Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council
Fiona Duncan, Chief Officer - Health and Social Care, The Highland Council
Fiona Malcolm, Chief Officer – Integrated People Services, The Highland Council (remote)
Arlene Johnstone, Chief Officer – Highland Health and Social Care, NHS Highland
Ian Kyle, Chair, Community Learning, Development and Engagement Strategic Group
Alison Clark, Chair, Poverty Reduction Delivery Group
James Maybee, Chair, Community Justice Partnership
Gail Prince, Partnership Development Manager
Melanie Murray, Principal Committee Officer, The Highland Council

Also in attendance:
Hayley Brown, Senior Manager Early Years, The Highland Council
Jaci Douglas, Chief Executive, Care and Learning Alliance
James Welsh, Chief Officer – Enterprise and Investment, The Highland Council (remote)

Sarah Compton-Bishop in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Chief Superintendent Rob Shepherd, Steve Walsh, Kenny Steele 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 – 10 March 2026;
ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 10 December 2025; and
iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 10 February 2026.

The Chair of the Community Justice Partnership reported that a meeting of the Partnership had taken place earlier that week, at which the Minutes of the March meeting had been approved. He undertook to ensure that the Board received the most up-to-date Minutes in future.

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.

The Board **NOTED** the Action Tracker.

The Chair advised that item 15 on the agenda would be considered at this stage to accommodate the Scottish Government Place Director.

15. Scottish Government Update

The Scottish Government Place Director provided an update on developments within the Scottish Government following the recent election.

A new administration had been appointed and Parliamentary Committees established. Changes within the Civil Service were anticipated over the summer to align organisational structures with portfolios. The First Minister had outlined a strong focus on delivery, with particular emphasis on addressing the cost of living crisis and the reform of Scotland's public services. Reference was also made to recent engagement with Chief Executives on these matters.

It was reported that the recruitment campaign for the Director-General Health and Social Care and Chief Executive of NHS Scotland post was currently live. The Scottish Government's commitment to supporting the Inverness-Highland UK City of Culture bid was highlighted, and discussions were planned on how that support could be provided.

The Chief Executive, The Highland Council, then provided an update on progress with the City of Culture bid. A Cultural Assembly involving a range of partners was scheduled to take place the following week, and discussions had been arranged with Scottish Government representatives as an initial step in considering how different national agencies could support the bid. The competitive nature of the process was highlighted, and reference was made to the need to develop not only a bid proposal but also a viable alternative plan that would provide meaningful support for cultural sector development should the bid be unsuccessful.

It was explained that information relating to the bid was being shared on a limited basis due to the competitive nature of the process. A report would be presented to the Full Council later in the month, with more detailed discussion to take place in private session.

The Chair expressed thanks for the updates and referred to the positive and constructive discussion at the earlier development session regarding meaningful and intentional engagement with the Scottish Government Place Director, and the wider support available. This matter would be taken forward with the Place Director outwith the meeting.

The Board **NOTED** the update.

5. Partnership Development Team Quarterly Report: March – June 2026

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/9/26 by the Partnership Development Manager.

The Chair drew attention to the risks outlined in the report in respect of secretariat and Chair gaps within Community Partnerships, and referred to discussions at the earlier development session regarding the refresh of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) and the need to ensure that all partners were contributing to that and to the delivery of the HOIP.

The Board **NOTED** the Partnership Development Team's quarterly progress for March to June 2026.

6. Fuel Poverty

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/10/26 by the Partnership Development Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- in response to a question regarding capacity, it was emphasised that, as addressing poverty and inequalities was a core function of the CPP, partners would have to commit to making capacity available to respond to the issue of fuel poverty. It was explained that initial discussions had taken place with Changeworks and other relevant organisations regarding their capacity and commitment, and that there was buy-in from them. It was also highlighted that a previous report on fuel poverty, "A Perfect Storm", was being re-launched the following week, and that there was a real appetite to bring together discussions on fuel poverty;
- the need to link with the Scottish Government Place Director was emphasised and, given that a new Scottish Government had been appointed and that a new Programme for Government was due to be published in the near future, it was suggested that this was an opportune time to engage with the Scottish Government on the issue of fuel poverty in Highland and the work being undertaken to address it;
- place-based resilience, aligned to Highland Adapts and adaptation planning, was key, and its inclusion in the longer-term recommendations in the report was welcomed;
- the cross-cutting nature of fuel poverty, and its wider impacts on poverty more generally, was recognised, as were the parallels with the inequalities associated with energy pricing at a UK level; and
- it was suggested that information on Work Life Highland, which provided support for individuals in employment who wished to upskill or increase their working hours, be included in the proposed fuel poverty support resource.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
ii. **APPROVED** the recommendations outlined in section 6 of the report initially, taking into account the points raised during discussion.

7. The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2025: "A strong start: health and wellbeing in the early years"

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/11/26 by the Director of Public Health, NHS Highland, who gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

The Chief Executive, the Highland Council, thanked the Director of Public Health for the Annual Report (the Report) and spoke in detail to discussions that had taken place within the Council's Corporate Management Team and with the Chief Executive, NHS Highland, which had resulted in two immediate actions being taken, namely the digitisation of data collection in respect of child development reviews and the universalisation of assessment of 4-5 year olds. The Report had generated a number of questions, particularly in relation to the alignment of Council and NHS Highland systems, and it was considered that it would lead to improvements. Furthermore, whilst the need for data on the various developmental milestones was acknowledged, of greater interest was the journey of the child, how the system supported progression through those milestones and how to get a sense of how a child was developing.

In responding to the points raised, the Director of Public Health commented that the purpose of the Report was to generate conversation and questions, and welcomed hearing about some of the discussions that had taken place. She concurred regarding the importance of the child's journey and suggested that a key question was how a child's overall wellbeing could be understood. Further discussion took place on the issues surrounding universalism and proportionate universalism, and the Chief Executive, The Highland Council, suggested that the Director of Public Health be invited to attend a joint Chief Executives' meeting to explore the Report and the issues it had raised in greater detail.

The Assistant Chief Executive – People, The Highland Council, explained that the data in respect of child development reviews (Table 4.2 on page 53 of the Report) had been reviewed in June 2025 to establish its accuracy. Assurance was provided that a higher number of assessments were being carried out than the table suggested, with the figures for 6-8 weeks and 4-5 years being 93% and 68% respectively. This demonstrated the importance of improving the system. However, the figures indicated only the percentage of assessments undertaken. Of greater value was an understanding of whether or not children were meeting their developmental milestones and what action might be required as a consequence.

The Chair suggested that an update be provided at a future meeting of the Board to provide reassurance that the points raised during discussion were being progressed through the relevant governance routes.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the content of the report and the approach taken;
ii. **NOTED** the recommendations of the report;
iii. **AGREED** that an update be provided at a future meeting of the Board to provide reassurance that the points raised during discussion were being progressed through the relevant governance routes.

8. Highland Children's Services Partnership Plan 2026 – 2029

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/12/26 by the Chair of the Children's Services Planning Partnership Board.

The Chair of the Children's Services Planning Partnership Board explained that, since the agenda and papers had been circulated, an amendment had been made to Health and Wellbeing Outcome Statements in the Highland Children's Services Partnership Plan (the Plan), specifically relating to neurodevelopmental pathways. The amendment was minor and sought only to strengthen the focus on a more preventative, coordinated and neuro-affirming approach within the Partnership, and on setting more realistic and deliverable ambition for improving access.

During discussion, it was highlighted that the Plan had been well received at the recent meeting of the Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee, and the significant amount of work undertaken to capture the voice of young people had been recognised. Discussion had also taken place regarding the need to capture the voice of the youngest children and how this could be achieved in a meaningful way.

Reference was made to discussions at the earlier development session regarding children's participation in and around the CPP, and how young people could be included in the conversations taking place. Further discussion ensued, during which it was queried whether a performance measure was required in that regard. It was suggested that information be presented to a future development session or Board meeting on the sector-leading children's rights and participation portal and the significant amount of work undertaken to ensure that children were not consulted multiple times, but that their views were captured, retained and used to inform policy development. It was further commented that it was necessary to consider how to embed that approach, not only within the work of the Integrated Children's Services Board but across the CPP more generally, and to learn from the participation and involvement of young people. It was added that the technology used to capture the views of children and young people was continually evolving, and that it was necessary to adapt accordingly. Finally, it was suggested that, in addition to the data being gathered on the views of children and young people, there was a need for some form of CPP Youth Forum to facilitate direct dialogue with them.

The Board **APPROVED** the Highland Children's Services Partnership Plan 2026-2029, subject to the minor amendment summarised by the Chair of the Children's Services Planning Partnership Board.

9. HOIP Delivery Plan Progress Report – Childcare Update

There had been circulated an update paper regarding childcare in rural and island communities.

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

- it was considerably more straightforward to implement the Scottish Government's childcare policy in an urban Central Belt local authority area, where a range of options could be offered to families, than it was in Highland.
- local solutions were key, and it was necessary to identify ways to increase third sector capacity to enable some Council provision to be decommissioned, although it was acknowledged that this would challenging;
- families were choosing not to move to, or were leaving, rural and island communities due to a lack of childcare provision, which limited their ability to work. A lack of childcare provision also affected businesses and their ambitions for growth, as well as public services, and the ability to flex provision to accommodate a range of working patterns, including seasonal employment, was needed. It was added, in some areas, there was no childcare provision at all, and reference was made to several relatively large businesses that were at risk of falling below minimum staffing levels because employees were unable to secure housing or childcare;
- the links between a lack of childcare provision and poverty were highlighted;
- it was necessary to consider the totality of resources within a community, including opportunities to co-locate childcare provision with other services and utilise staff flexibly to provide resilience;
- putting children at the centre of communities allowed them to thrive and grow, and helped to build a strong communities;
- as indicated in the update paper and introduction, one of the main barriers to implementing flexible local solutions was the regulation and legislation surrounding childcare provision, an example of which was provided;
- whilst extensive discussions had taken place regarding the childcare challenges in Highland, the position remained much the same as when the matter had first been raised almost two years ago. The important role of the CPP Board in raising issues such as this, and, as discussed earlier, fuel poverty, with the Scottish Government was emphasised, as was the need for consistent messaging with other bodies such as the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP);

- it was highlighted that similar discussions were taking place in relation to older adults, and it was suggested that there was a need for a broader conversation about all-age care provision in rural areas;
- it was suggested that the issues raised during discussion, along with the application for Scottish Government funding to test unregulated school-aged childcare referred to during the introduction, be brought to the attention of the Scottish Government Place Director, who had left the meeting prior to this item;
- the inflexibility of the regulation and legislation referred to earlier was creating significant difficulties and contributing to depopulation, which was contrary to the Scottish Government's Depopulation Action Plan and islands policies, and it was essential to raise the matter with the Scottish Government. It was highlighted that similar discussions had taken place at the earlier meeting of HIREP. A letter was being sent by HIREP to the Scottish Government, and it was suggested that a letter in similar terms be sent on behalf of the CPP Board to relevant Scottish Government Ministers; and
- it was proposed that further discussions on the way forward take place outwith the meeting.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the update paper; and
ii. **AGREED** that the issues raised during discussion be brought to the attention of the Scottish Government Place Director; that a letter be sent to relevant Scottish Government Ministers, on behalf of the Board, in similar terms to the letter from the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership; and that further discussions on the way forward take place outwith the meeting.

10. Invest Highland

The Chief Executive, The Highland Council, gave a presentation on the Invest Highland approach and associated website, which had been developed to capture and promote, in one place, the investment opportunities that existed in Highland at region-wide, local area and place/community level, examples of which were provided. He encouraged partners to highlight any opportunities they felt had not been captured so that they could be included. It was added that some of these investment opportunities could potentially be supported through the Social Value Charter, which was the subject of the following item.

The Chief Executive, HIE, referred to discussions at the earlier development session regarding the need to promote the region more effectively at Scottish and UK level, and commented that a resource such as Invest Highland would be helpful in that regard. However, there was also a need to take a more proactive approach to the inward investment activity associated with the global offshore wind sector, for example, and joint working with the Council would be beneficial.

The Area Manager – Caithness and Sutherland, HIE, spoke to the work taking place in Caithness and Sutherland to support SSEN in addressing the legacy housing issue, and highlighted the facilitative role that HIE, as an enterprise agency, could play.

The Board otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

11. HOIP Delivery Plan Progress Report - Community Wealth Building – Social Value Charter

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/13/26 by the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities, The Highland Council.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- in relation to the governance options for the Strategic Investment Fund (the Fund), the recommended Option 2 – a partnership led fund with the Council as the accountable body – was considered to be a sensible approach in light of previous discussions. In response to a question, it was confirmed that, at this stage, the focus was on agreeing the governance model in principle, and that details of the proposed partners, including public sector, community and developer representatives, would be brought to a future meeting. It was added that it was essential to manage the proposed public private sector partnership in a way that encouraged private sector investment, and the importance of including third sector partners and working in close alignment with HIE was emphasised;
- NatureScot had a regulatory role within the planning system, and would be providing advice on renewable energy projects irrespective of whether developers had signed up to the Social Value Charter;
- the scale of investment that had been received to date was welcomed;
- in relation to joining up projects on the ground and investment, it was highlighted that NatureScot operated the Nature Finance Exchange platform, which comprised a prospectus of quality assured regional and place-based projects across Scotland that delivered multiple benefits in terms of biodiversity and climate resilience. The platform was commended as a potential route for delivery, and the Head of Operations – North, NatureScot, undertook to follow up to ensure that a link to it was provided; and
- the importance of ensuring that the proposed Investment Fund Board comprised the right members, and that the right projects were brought forward, was emphasised, and the Chair looked forward to further discussions in that regard, either at a future Board meeting or a development session.

The Board:

i. **AGREED** the refresh of the Social Value Charter to enable its application to other sectors in Highland;
ii. **AGREED**, in principle, to the proposed governance model arrangements for the Highland Futures Investment Fund, subject to Council agreement on 25 June 2026;
iii. **AGREED** the Investment Priorities for the Highland Futures Investment Fund;
iv. **NOTED** the update on the progress against sign up to the Charter;
v. **NOTED** the response to the Scottish Government on the Good Practice Guidance Principles for Community Benefit, and that officers continued to engage with Government to affect change; and
vi. **NOTED** the development of the Highland Project Bank.

12. HOIP Delivery Plan Progress Report – Housing - Highland Housing Challenge – Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/14/26 by the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities, The Highland Council.

During discussion, the significant amount of activity outlined in the update was welcomed. It was recognised that there was no single solution to the housing challenge and that a variety of measures would be required to tackle it.

Concern was expressed that housing completions had fallen from 1,000 homes in 2024/25 to 880 in 2025/26. Whilst the range of actions being taken forward was encouraging, it was questioned why housing delivery continued to decline and whether current initiatives would be sufficient to reverse the trend.

Reference was also made to a community-led housing project in Applecross which had taken 17 years to come to fruition and would cost the community £8.5m, demonstrating both the significant length of time and level of investment required to bring forward housing developments. Despite the activity taking place, an insufficient number of homes was being delivered to meet housing need, and addressing this remained a key issue.

In response, it was highlighted that there was a lag between the actions being taken and the pace of housing delivery. Reference was made to an imbalance between energy developers and housing developers in terms of demand for, and delivery of, housing, and to recent decisions regarding energy developments which had affected housing developers' appetite to release housing to the market.

The cost of housebuilding, the pace of the construction process, developer capacity, the attitude of housing developers, and current conservative development models were highlighted as key issues. The need to bring more developers into the market and reduce construction costs was emphasised, and an example was provided of a recent tender for social housing units where the significant cost per house had created subsidy challenges. It was proposed that the Chief Executives of the Council and HIE hold further discussions on these matters.

It was suggested that progress on investment would help to instil confidence and increase the pace of housing delivery. There was also a need for joint representations to the Scottish Government to seek investment for social housing and to highlight the need for a financial underwriting scheme for rural housing to provide greater confidence to developers and local authorities. It was further commented that the Council's housing fund from Council Tax on second homes could, in future years, support property purchases and mid-market rent solutions.

The Board **NOTED** the updates against the Highland Housing Challenge Partnership Action Plan contained within the report and detailed at Appendix 1 of the report.

13. Highland Community Justice Partnership Interim Report, June 2026

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/15/26 by the Highland Community Justice Partnership Independent Chair and the Highland Community Justice Partnership Manager.

During discussion, reference was made to the significant cultural and mindset shift within the justice system, with fewer people entering custody due to the presumption of liberty set out in the Lord Advocate's guidelines. The focus needed to change accordingly, and it was suggested that the Community Justice Partnership should be integrated into a wider range of partnership groups and activity. Others concurred, and it was proposed that mechanisms be identified to bring community justice issues onto wider partnership agendas. Experience from Fife was highlighted, where community justice issues had been considered across the wider partnership, including by Head Teachers, helping partners to better understand their contribution to this work and its relationship to wider partnership activity.

Reference was also made to the Custody Link Project, which provided support for individuals within the community and helped to prevent their return to custody, and concern was expressed regarding the ongoing challenge of securing funding for the project on an annual basis. The need for a holistic approach, extending beyond the individual to consider outcomes for families, children and young people, and the wider community, was also highlighted. During further discussion, it was suggested that partners be asked to identify a sustainable funding solution. The Chair of the Community Justice Partnership reported that a working group had been established to consider the future of the project, and that research had been commissioned through UHI to inform its deliberations. It was added that there were clear links with mental health and psychological therapy services, and that it was important to ensure these services were connected to the project.

The Chair suggested that further discussion on the points raised take place outwith the meeting, and referred to related discussions during the earlier development session regarding siloed ways of working and place-based approaches.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
ii. **AGREED** that further discussions take place outwith the meeting on how to better integrate the Community Justice Partnership into wider partnership groups and activity, and to progress a sustainable funding solution for the Custody Link Project.

14. Natural Capital Short-Life Working Group Update

There had been circulated Report No CPPB/16/26 by the Head of Operations – North, NatureScot.

The Board:

i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
ii. **AGREED** that the invitations to the in-person workshops on 22 and 23 June 2026 be re-circulated.

16. Strategic Risk Register Summary

The Board **NOTED** the Strategic Risk Register Summary as circulated.

17. Date of Next Meeting

The Board **NOTED** that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on Friday 11 September 2026 at 2.30 pm.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm.