



CORPORATE STRATEGY 2017-21

Report by Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT To provide an update on the development of the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2017-21.

COMPETENCE

- 1.1 There are no legal, financial, equalities or other constraints to the recommendations being implemented. The Strategy will be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment which will be addressed once the Strategy is finalised.

SUMMARY

- 2.1 As part of the review and development of the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2017-21, the Comhairle's Corporate Management Team facilitated a Members' Seminar on 21 June 2017. Further detail is provided at paragraphs 4.1 to 6.1 of the Report and the Members' discussion paper is at Appendix 2 to the Report.

- 2.2 Based on the outcome of that seminar and further input from Corporate Management Team, the Comhairle prepared a draft Corporate Strategy which it issued as a consultation document to the public, Community Planning Partners, Community Councils and Locality Planning Groups, in October 2017, with a deadline for responses set for 15 November 2017, subsequently extended to 17 November 2017.

The consultation was made available on the Comhairle's web site:

<https://cnes2.cne-siar.gov.uk/have-your-say/consultations/2017/corporate-strategy-2017-21/>.

and on e-Sgìre, the Comhairle's communities web site:

<https://e-sgìre.org/news/2017/10/draft-corporate-strategy-2017-21-consultation/>. Respondents were asked to respond using the feedback form at Appendix 3 to the Report.

- 2.3 An analysis of the responses is outlined in paragraphs 8.1 to 19.1 of the Report and the updated Draft Corporate Strategy is at Appendix 1 to the Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle:

- (a) consider the analysis of the responses and the proposed amendments to the draft Corporate Strategy;
- (b) approve the revised draft Corporate Strategy appended to the Report subject to any amendments agreed by the Comhairle and authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee and the Convener, to finalise the strategy and make arrangements for its publication; and
- (c) agree that the finalised Corporate Strategy forms the basis of Service Business Plans 2018/19.

Contact Officer: Angus Murray, Corporate Policy Manager, Ext 211218

Appendix 1: Draft Corporate Strategy 2017-21

Appendix 2: Strategic Priorities – Members' Discussion Paper

Appendix 3: Consultation Feedback Form

MEMBERS' SEMINAR

- 4.1 As part of a review and development of the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2017-21, the Comhairle held a Members' Seminar, involving six groups of Councillors and facilitated by Corporate Management Team (CMT), on 21 June 2017. The aim was to consider the Comhairle's future strategic priorities in the wider context of the current public sector financial environment, Community Planning, Community Empowerment, Health and Social Care integration, *Our Islands: Our Future, a Deal for the Islands* and the Islands Bill. The Members' discussion paper is detailed at Appendix 2 to the Report.

THE LOCAL OUTCOME IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 5.1 The initial basis of discussions at the Members' Seminar was the three overarching strategic priorities identified by the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership (OHCPP), as set out in its Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP), the successor to the Single Outcome Agreement. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 requires Community Planning Partnerships to publish a LOIP and at least one Locality Plan by October 2017, the purpose of which is to identify areas where added value can be achieved by Community Planning Partners working together to improve outcomes.
- 5.2 The three strategic priorities identified by the OHCPP are:
- the Outer Hebrides retains and attracts people to ensure a sustainable population;
 - the Outer Hebrides has sustainable economic growth and all our people have access to appropriate employment opportunities; and
 - the islands offer attractive opportunities that improve the quality of life, wellbeing and health of all our people.

KEY PRIORITIES

- 6.1 The outcomes of the discussions at the Members' Seminar provided the basis for further work by Corporate Management in drafting the Corporate Strategy 2017-21. The key priorities identified in the Corporate Strategy 2017-21 are:
- Economy and Jobs;
 - Communities and Housing;
 - Education, Skills and Training; and
 - Quality of Life, Health and Wellbeing.

These priorities are considered to be complementary to the LOIP priorities.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Thereafter, the draft Strategy was put out to consultation in October 2017 to the public, Community Planning Partners, Community Councils and Locality Planning Groups, with a deadline for responses set for 15 November 2017, subsequently extended to 17 November 2017.

The consultation was made available on the Comhairle's web site:

<https://cnes2.cne-siar.gov.uk/have-your-say/consultations/2017/corporate-strategy-2017-21/>

and on e-Sgìre, the Comhairle's communities web site:

<https://e-sgìre.org/news/2017/10/draft-corporate-strategy-2017-21-consultation/>.

The consultation was also advertised in the press. Respondents were asked to respond using the feedback form at Appendix 3 to the Report.

- 7.2 There were seven hard copy responses to the consultation as follows: Hebridean Housing Partnership; Dr Angus McKellar, Medical Director, NHS Western Isles; the Comhairle's SNP Group; Uist Locality Planning Group; Historic Scotland; Scottish Natural Heritage; and Harris and South Lochs Councillors. The responses received are summarised in the Report.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

- 8.1 It is acknowledged that this is a relatively small number of responses and none of these are from the general public. This is in comparison to 274 responses to the Corporate Strategy consultation in 2012.

However, the process has been ongoing since June 2017 and Members' input at the Members' Seminar can be taken to reflect the views of their electorates.

- 8.2 The Comhairle's Corporate Strategy is a high level document which sets out the strategic direction of the Comhairle for the next Comhairle term, reflecting political priorities and choices. It is complementary to the LOIP in terms of priorities and aspiration and it is acknowledged that the Comhairle will have a contribution to make to achieving some of the outcomes outlined in the LOIP, as appropriate, in partnership.
- 8.3 The Comhairle's Corporate Strategy is not the Comhairle's business plan; neither is it a sectoral, financial or action plan. The Strategy will be supported by service business plans which will outline in detail how the Comhairle will aim to achieve the objectives detailed in the Strategy. Service business plans, which are approved each February at the budget-setting meetings of the Comhairle, are public documents, as are the quarterly progress reports and performance monitoring reports. This facilitates scrutiny both by Members and the communities.
- 8.4 It should be noted that it is not possible to guarantee that everything in the Strategy will be achieved as the external social, economic, legal and regulatory, and financial environment will impact on the Comhairle's resources as well as those of partners, albeit not always adversely.
- 8.5 In terms of an analysis of the responses, the following broad headings were considered:

The Vision of the Comhairle
Population
Economy
Finance
Brexit
Health and Social Care
Community Empowerment
Community Planning
Our Islands Our Future
Single Public Authority
Comhairle's Strategic Priorities

COMHAIRLE'S VISION

- 9.1 Responses included the following comments:

- The vision is good.
- The vision could be shorter and more succinct.
- It could have included more emphasis on Health and Social Care.
- The vision is too long and not particularly inclusive.
- The vision should be an identifiable 'brand' which communities can immediately connect with and relate to the Comhairle's aims and objectives.
- The Strategy lacks a challenging vision and is too general and vague.

Comment

The vision has been revised in an attempt to make it more succinct, memorable and inclusive.

POPULATION

- 10.1 One response was received and is summarised as follows:

- Strong disappointment is expressed at the lack of emphasis in the Strategy on population and the measures which the Comhairle might take to achieve a sustainable population with the right age and gender balance.
- Furthermore, the Comhairle, as a key partner on the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, should be leading on this agenda, setting year on year targets.

Comment

The issue of population is a complex one with many inter-dependent factors, many of these external to a local authority or indeed any other public sector agency. However, it is an overarching and cross-cutting theme in the Corporate Strategy and at the heart of all activities under the priorities of Economy and Jobs; Communities and Housing; Education, Skills and Training; and Quality of Life, Health and Wellbeing. Jobs and housing are essential to retaining and growing population and the Comhairle and its partners have committed to a requirement of net inward migration of 1500 people. This is aimed at rebalancing the demographic of the population with the necessary skills set to deliver sustainable services that meet the needs and expectations of the communities of the Outer Hebrides. The Comhairle's apprenticeship programme is one example of best practice in terms of attracting people to and retaining people on these islands and providing them with a platform for sustainable employment. The Comhairle and its partners will work towards the actions they agree to achieve this level of net inward migration. In addition, the Comhairle's service business plans will identify how its actions will contribute to this target.

ECONOMY

11.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- One of the challenges faced by the local economy is the adverse impact of the changing weather system on transportation and service delivery, to and from the islands, as a result of cancellations, and also on the fabric of our buildings long term.
- A further challenge is "a lack of long-term planning - being able to assess the impact of decisions being made today not just for the 5 year period but over a 20 to 30 year period".

Comment

The impact of adverse weather on the islands' way of life has been incorporated into the Strategy.

The Corporate Strategy is the opportunity for Councillors to set their policy manifesto for each Council term but it should also be considered in the wider context of the ten year Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

FINANCE

12.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- There is insufficient financial information in the Strategy to make an informed choice about its objectives.
- The "Comhairle's Corporate Strategy must be accompanied by a medium-term financial strategy with all objectives costed. The revenue consequences of any associated capital spend must also be included..... if a medium-term financial strategy does not accompany the Plan, then, at the very least, it should include detail on the cost of each objective, high-level revenue and capital forecasts of future income, cost pressures, managing spending within budget and financial risks in delivering the Strategy's objectives".

Comment

The resources (human and financial) required to deliver on objectives will be identified both as part of the Comhairle's service business planning process and the approval and reviews of LOIP Actions Plans. It should be noted that some of these objectives are aspirational, some are in the future and some are dependent on external and government funding, as well as the commitments of partners. Ultimately, the Comhairle will be pursuing its policy objectives within its resources, i.e. what is affordable at its own hand or in partnership with UK and Scottish Governments and/or agency partners. However, it is proposed that the Strategy be reviewed yearly to determine an accurate correlation between performance and finance.

BREXIT

13.1 One response was received as follows:

- Brexit– how might the Comhairle mitigate the effects of Brexit on community sustainability?

Comment

There is still a great deal of uncertainty around Brexit as to the return of powers and the repatriation of resources and funding to Scotland so the precise social and economic impacts are not known. A recent Report by the Highlands and Islands European Partnership identified some possible impacts on the region as follows: a loss of funding to the region; loss of a partnership approach to longer-term strategic planning, in line with 7-year EU funding programmes; reduction in participation in collaborative work with other EU Member States; concerns over policy and delivery mechanisms for future regional development policy and funding; uncertainty over the status of non UK EU nationals currently working or studying in the Highlands and Islands, or planning to do so in the future; and uncertainty over future trading arrangements. However, Brexit could present opportunities for local authorities to address their specific priorities, through a targeted regional policy.

The Comhairle and Highlands and Islands partners are committed to securing for the region a fit for purpose and fully funded regional policy to replace EU Cohesion Policy post-2020 with similar if not greater levels of funding than received in recent years from the EU. The Convention of the Highlands and Islands has already undertaken a significant piece of work in this area. Furthermore, a successful Deal for the Islands and an Islands Bill could also, potentially, mitigate the effects of Brexit on community sustainability. In parallel, the Comhairle will continue to monitor the national picture at UK level, notably, UK Government's Industrial Strategy, launched on 27 November 2017, and the Shared Prosperity Fund and the implications of both for future Scottish Regional Policy.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

14.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- No mention is made of the pressures on the NHS which impact on Health and Social Care.
- Strategy seems to focus on the challenges of achieving Health and Social Care integration rather than on the real challenge of how to deliver integrated Health and Social Care, these including: recruitment and retention of the workforce, finance and national pressures on the NHS.
- The passage under Health and Social Care “to support the development of Locality Planning Groups which will help to plan services for local communities; and to oversee the delivery of all of the services delegated to them by the Local Authority and the Health Board” should be amended to read “to enable and empower the Locality Planning Groups (which are already established) which will help to plan services for local communities; and to oversee the delivery of all of the services delegated to them by the Local Authority and the Health Board”.
- The Health and Social Care section focuses overly on the elderly while there's not enough in the Strategy about prevention and healthier lifestyles.

Comment

The original quoted statement is taken verbatim from Cùram is Slàinte nan Eilean Siar, Strategic Plan 2016-2019, page 4, and there will be an opportunity to amend that document when it is due to be refreshed in April 2018. The other points made are reflected in the revised draft.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

15.1 One response was received as follows:

- The Strategy is lacking in this area.
- In terms of Local Democracy & Empowerment, “ ... there is no commitment in the draft of the role of the Comhairle and its responsibilities under the provisions of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2013 (*sic*) to empower and support communities in shaping their own futures and be involved in decisions affecting them..... the draft would benefit from proposals that will give our communities confidence that the Council knows what the term 'empowerment' really means in terms of the legislation and the devolution of power, etc....”
-

Comment

Greater emphasis on Community Empowerment has been incorporated into the revised draft Strategy.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

16.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- The challenges facing Community Planning locally include: being able to deliver on objectives; communicating to the public what is planned and who is responsible for delivery of the objectives; the co-ordination of strategic plans of all partners; lack of involvement of local businesses in the planning process; demonstrating leadership and the ability to drive change; and engagement of stakeholders.
- The Strategy “should include all council responsibilities for delivering those outcomes contained in the Outer Hebrides Community Plan/Local Outcome Improvement Plan (i.e. including all Council responsibilities for achieving outcomes contained in the IJB’s Strategic Plan). This should be referenced back to the originating plan so that the reader is clear on what the Comhairle is doing under the banner of Community Planning and what it is doing because it has chosen to do so. This helps the public attribute responsibility for delivery (which has become increasingly diffuse)”.
- The “the Community Plan covers a period of around ten years whilst the Corporate Strategy lasts four years (2017/21) and so **measurable targets need to be set and tailored appropriately** to the timescales of the Community Plan”.
- The following should be adopted from the Manifesto for Rural Scotland as agreed at the Scottish Rural Parliament: “the public sector to recognise that communities are stronger, happier, more successful when they have a greater control over their future, and to create a culture of support for, and trust in, community-led initiatives and activities, and remove barriers to community-led activity. An holistic and proactive approach to positive community impact and planning, driven by local people that leads to decision making by all decision –makers, across all sectors, particularly service provision”.

Comment

The challenges facing Community Planning are known to the Comhairle and Community Planning Partnership and they will aim to address these through the LOIP and in particular the Action Plans currently being developed. The Comhairle’s Corporate Strategy and the LOIP do have different timespans, but each will have an annual review. However, it is proposed not to incorporate points 2 and 3 in the revised draft Strategy because it is considered that the Comhairle’s Corporate Strategy is its own manifesto while the Comhairle’s responsibilities in terms of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan are identified in that Plan and performance monitoring arrangements will be reported through that mechanism. As regards the last point, it is suggested that the Strategy is consistent with these principles and that decisions will be made at the most local level appropriate.

OUR ISLANDS: OUR FUTURE (A DEAL FOR THE ISLANDS)

17.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- It would bring greater resources and control which would help to make the Outer Hebrides a place where people would want to come and stay, work and contribute as citizens; it could bring about an increase in sustainable jobs and generate genuine efficiencies which could be put back into service delivery.
- IT Connectivity, major investment in housing and jobs identified as key priorities in terms of the Deal.

Comment

The Comhairle’s proposals to UK and Scottish Government will be detailed in the Deal for the Islands and through other discussions which it is anticipated will be a significant inward investment aimed at bringing about transformational change and empowering local communities.

SINGLE PUBLIC AUTHORITY

18.1 Responses are as follows:

- “The principle is good if it would deliver better quality services and jobs to attract people to come and work in the Outer Hebrides.....would need to make sure the focus was outward on service

delivery and not inward. It might also present an opportunity to decentralise work opportunity outwith Stornoway”;

- There is no need for the establishment of an Single Public Authority in light of the existence of the Integrated (sic) Joint Board; rather the thrust should now be on developing Regional links for Health and Social Care;
- “.....if such governance changes are introduced then it is essential there is a structure to enable accountability for the community it serves. This is not the case with the IJB because they hold the ultimate say and likewise the Health Board whose members are appointed nationally. This renders the local voice powerless despite the presence of LPGs etc. The Scottish Health Council should be the mechanism but they have no authority over the IJB and Health Board. So governance must be thoroughly thought through which is why the adoption of the above (*previous*) statement from the Scottish Rural Parliament is so important”.

Comment

The Comhairle has had a policy commitment for many years in favour of the integration of public service functions, with the aim of supporting services and jobs at all levels within the Outer Hebrides, providing efficiency and removing duplication in the provision of public services and increasing, wherever possible, democratic oversight and scrutiny of services to communities. The Comhairle remains open to engagement, formal or informal, with communities, to ensure that communities understand and are comfortable with future processes of decision making and governance, and to consider whether these can be brought closer to communities which wish and are able to take responsibility for their exercise.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

19.1 Responses are summarised as follows:

- The overarching priorities should be as follows: Local Democracy & Empowerment; Quality of Life & Our Islands' Population; Fairness & Economic Development; Services, Management & Employees.
- A distinction needs to be made between objectives and outcomes.
- There is no mention of employees or transformational change in the Strategy.
- In terms of Energy; Tourism/Infrastructure; Culture and Transport, more detail should be provided as to how the challenges in these sectors are to be met and how the Comhairle's aspirations can be realised.
- The draft Strategy recognises the importance of the historic environment to the economic future of the area and Historic Scotland would be happy to engage further in this area in order to help deliver on these aspirations. It is reckoned that the economic impact of archaeology in the Outer Hebrides is an estimated £4million value of gross visitor spend per annum with the potential for this to double to £8million in the next ten years.
- The importance of the islands' high quality natural environment as an economic driver and its contribution to local communities' quality of life could be made clearer in the strategy, in particular in the Quality of Life, Wellbeing and Health section.

Comment

The Comhairle's overarching strategic priorities have emanated from the Members' Seminar in June 2017 and are broadly consistent with the LOIP priorities. The purpose of the Corporate Strategy is to state the Comhairle's political objectives, policy framework, to be outward looking and state what the Comhairle can do for the community. In terms of the sectors as outlined, the Comhairle has an Energy Strategy in place, approved by the Comhairle in 2014, and to be revised after the Scottish Government publishes its own Energy Strategy in early to mid-2018. The Comhairle's existing Strategy supports commercial and community Onshore Wind deployment in the islands. The Comhairle has led on 'Tourism 2020' and the Creative and Cultural Industry Strategy, and also has a short, medium and long-term Cultural and Heritage programme which is progressing incrementally as funding becomes available. The Comhairle provides administrative support to and is a member of HITRANS and its draft Regional Transport Strategy, May 2017, can be viewed here: <https://hitrans.org.uk/userfiles/file/HITRANS%20Main%20Issues%20Report%2017%20high%20res.pdf>. The Comhairle provided an update on national, regional and local transport strategies at Transportation & Infrastructure Committee in March 2016, which can be viewed here:

<http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/committees/documents/e-agendas/2016/03-march/transportation/agendas/J%20Item%2010A%20-%20National%20Regional%20and%20Local%20Transport%20Strategies.pdf>.

The proposals regarding the natural environment are incorporated in the revised draft.

Members' Seminar (21 June 2017)
Strategic Priorities – Members' Discussion Paper

The Outer Hebrides retains and attracts people to ensure a sustainable population

What comments would you make on the OHCPP proposals?

How should the Comhairle seek to retain and attract young people to the Outer Hebrides?

On the basis that no one agency can do everything, on what should the Comhairle concentrate its efforts in terms of increasing, retaining and sustaining population?

How should the Comhairle respond to falling school rolls?

What can the Comhairle do to increase the population in our remoter communities?

The Outer Hebrides has sustainable economic growth and all our people have access to appropriate employment opportunities

What comments would you make on the OHCPP proposals?

The Comhairle believes that economic regeneration is vital to strengthening our communities, sustaining population and securing the future of the Outer Hebrides. To secure that economic regeneration, on which sectors of the economy should the Comhairle place highest priority over the next period?

What are the main barriers to sustainable economic development in the Outer Hebrides and how can these be addressed?

How might the Comhairle help to provide more vocational educational opportunities for our young people?

In which sectors are there skill shortages?

Do you agree that the natural, cultural and historical resources of the islands should be used to sustain the economic wellbeing of the islands?

Should the Comhairle oppose existing and further environmental designations?

How might the Comhairle strengthen the development of Gaelic as a living language and an asset to the local economy?

The islands offer attractive opportunities that improves the quality of life, wellbeing and health for all our people

What comments would you make on the OHCPP proposals?

What can the Comhairle do to strengthen Health and Social Care Integration?

How can the Comhairle improve partnership working for the benefit of the wider community?

What further could the Comhairle do to support older and vulnerable people to live well and safe at home or in their community?

How might the Comhairle help people to become fitter and healthier?

What do you think the Comhairle should do in terms of future community facilities to strengthen and maintain our communities?

In your opinions, which Comhairle services are of most value or benefit in your communities?

What measures could the Comhairle implement to reduce instances of social isolation in our communities?

Democracy, Governance and Community Empowerment

The Comhairle, together with Orkney and Shetland Islands Council, has developed the *Our Islands: Our Future* campaign, and the three Councils have concluded successful partnership agreements with both Scottish and UK Governments, including the Islands' Bill and the potential for a Deal for the Islands.

Scottish Government is also considering potential changes to Scotland's systems for Local Governance, many of the principles of which will overlap with Strand 1, *Enhancing Local Democracy*, of the Islands' Deal submission. The Comhairle has had a policy commitment for many years in favour of the integration of public service functions, with the aim of preserving services and jobs at all levels within our islands, providing efficiency and removing duplication in the provision of public services and increasing, wherever possible, democratic oversight and scrutiny of services to our communities. The Comhairle remains open to engagement, formal or informal, with communities, to ensure that communities understand and would be comfortable with future processes of decision making and governance, and to consider whether these can be brought closer to communities which wish and are able to take responsibility for their exercise.

Do these principles reflect your aspirations and proposals on Local Governance and Community Empowerment?

What can we do to strengthen Community Engagement and Empowerment?

How do we best influence the forthcoming debate across Scotland on Local Governance and integration of public services?

**Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Draft Corporate Strategy 2017-21
Feedback Questionnaire**

Do you have any comments regarding the Comhairle's vision statement?

Section 2 of the Strategy outlines the current and future social and economic context in which the Comhairle delivers its services. Are there any other major external challenges which will impact on the Comhairle's strategic direction, resources and service delivery?

The Western Isles has secured significant EU funding in the last twenty years which is due to cease after the UK withdraws from the EU. How should the Comhairle seek the best possible deal for the Western Isles post-Brexit?

What, in your view, are the main challenges facing Health and Social Care integration?

What in your view are the main challenges facing Community Planning in the Western Isles?

Would you be in favour of a Single Public Authority for the Western Isles and if so what do you think the benefits would be? If not, please outline why?

The recent focus of the 'Our Islands Our Future' campaign has been on the development of a "Deal for the Islands" and lobbying for the Islands Bill. What best outcomes could be achieved from either?

Do you agree with the Comhairle's overarching strategic priorities at section 4 of the Strategy? If so, which ones are most important? If not, what others could be added and why?

Do you have any other comments on the content of the Comhairle's draft Corporate Strategy 2017-21?