



## Orkney Partnership Board

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 June 2023 in person and via Teams.

### 1. Attendance and apologies

#### Facilitating partners

Orkney Islands Council

NHS Orkney

Highlands & Islands Enterprise  
Police Scotland

Cllr Heather Woodbridge (elected  
Chair at the meeting)  
Meghan McEwen (retiring Vice  
Chair)  
Graeme Harrison  
Scott Robertson

#### Participating partners

Skills Development Scotland  
HITRANS  
Visit Scotland  
Historic Environment Scotland  
NatureScot

Anthony Standing  
Cllr David Dawson  
Cheryl Chapman  
Dorothy Hoskins  
Dave Mackay

#### Co-opted partners

Orkney Housing Association Ltd.  
Community Justice Partnership

Craig Spence  
Stephen Brown

#### In attendance

Orkney Islands Council

Orkney Islands Council  
Orkney Islands Council  
The Orkney Partnership  
Orkney Islands Council  
Orkney Islands Council  
NHS Orkney

Cllr James Stockan (retiring  
chair)  
Karen Greaves  
Anna Whelan  
George Vickers (Secretary)  
Oliver Reid  
Cllr Kristopher Leask  
Laura Skaife-Knight

#### Apologies

Voluntary Action Orkney

Scottish Government  
Scottish Ambulance Service

Morven Brooks (elected Vice  
Chair at the meeting)  
Joe Brown  
Andrew Fuller

**2. Draft minutes of the meeting of the Board 14 March 2023**

Minutes were approved.

**3. Matters arising**

None.

**4. Appointment of Chair – chaired by Oliver Reid**

A brief discussion was held over who was eligible to vote to which George sent a list around the group.

Nominations were invited for Chair of The Orkney Partnership Board

David Dawson nominated Heather Woodbridge. This was seconded by Craig Spence

Meghan McEwen nominated Craig Spence to which he declined.

Heather Woodbridge was appointed and took the chair.

**5. Appointment of Vice-chair**

David Dawson nominated Scott Robertson to which he declined.

Heather Woodbridge nominated Morven Brooks, and this was seconded by Meghan McEwen.

As Morven was absent from the meeting George Vickers will check with Morven to ensure she is happy to accept the role of Vice-chair.

**6. Appointment of chairs to the new Delivery Groups**

**6.1. Appoint Chair to the Cost of Living Task Force**

Heather thanked Craig Spence for chairing the group.

Craig informed the group that going forward it is vital that there is engagement from Education and Orkney Health and Care and suggested Stephen Brown take on the role of chair.

Craig suggested Stephen Brown take on the role. Stephen Brown accepted.

There were no other nominations and Stephen Brown was appointed into the role.

**6.2. Appoint Chair to the Sustainable Development Delivery Group**

Heather Woodbridge nominated Cllr Kristopher Leask. This was seconded by David Dawson. There were no further nominations. Kristopher Leask accepted the role.

**6.3. Appoint Chair to the Local Equality Delivery Group**

Heather Woodbridge nominated Meghan McEwen. This was seconded by Stephen Brown. There were no further nominations. Meghan McEwen accepted the role.

**7. Discussions of the roles and responsibilities of Board Members, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board and the Chairs of the Delivery Groups**

George Vickers shared slides with the group and explained that community planning is about how public bodies work together, and with local communities,

to design and deliver better services that make a real difference to local people's lives.

## **8. Update on the campaign to replace the Orkney Ferry Fleet and generally on transport**

The Orkney Partnership Board received an update on the current position with the need to replace the Orkney Ferries fleet from Cllr James Stockan. The main issue that came from the discussion related to scenario planning if a substantial proportion of the fleet or even if all the fleet was not available for a significant period.

James provided the background to how OIC took responsibility for the internal fleet in the 1980s so that EU money could be levered to fund, with the UK government, a RORO (roll-on roll-off) service to many islands for the first time. At the same time, most island ferry services have been moved to the Scottish Government (SG).

Currently, no progress is being made regarding the talks with the SG to identify funding to replace the fleet. While OIC is prepared to contribute, the total cost (ca £0.5billion) is beyond its resources and, until there is a plan to provide finance, there can be no plan to replace the fleet. Therefore, the service is likely to become more disrupted over time and eventually boats will come out of service for longer and longer periods, and ultimately the size of the fleet will decrease. This will reduce the service to the isles and have an impact on the partners and other agencies to provide service, an impact of freight and on the prosperity of the isles.

The view was expressed in the meeting that the internal ferry service is essential to the prosperity, growth and ultimately survival of the ferry link island communities.

The Council has decided that it has no choice but to commence scenario planning looking at the effect of some of the fleet or even all the fleet not being available for extended periods of time.

The discussion identified several possible effects of a reduced service on the ability to transport, amongst others:

- Residents – to access services and employment.
- Essential freight.
- Fuel.
- Food.
- Building materials.
- Tourists.
- Tradespeople.
- Medical staff.
- Service providers.
- Patients .
- School pupils.

- Emergency services: ambulances, fire service, police.

The Partnership agreed to support the scenario planning by:

- Examining how the different scenarios would affect their ability to provide their own services, how this would affect service users and what the cost implications would be (e.g., having to hire their own transport to get staff and service users to and from the isles).
- Engaging with the isles' communities, development trusts, community councils etc., so that the impact of a reduced ferry service on the island communities and the views of residents is at the centre. This will complement the work already begun by the OIC Comms Team to capture the perspectives of islanders.

It was agreed:

1. That all partners would engage with their 'own' ministers and relevant civil servants in SG to explain that this is not just a matter of transport, but how it affected with own areas, whether it is tourism or the health service.
2. That replacement of the internal fleet should be a priority for TOP, at least at the present.
3. That these matters would be considered by the Executive Group who will consider how best to coordinate the scenario planning amongst the partners, including whether a Short Life Working Group is required.

The next meeting to have a broader discussion on transport and Orkney.

## **9. Report from the Executive Group (EG) Chair Including First Responders SLWG update**

Oliver Reid told the group that the report had been circulated prior to the meeting. There has been a meeting with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) and Councillors to discuss matters. SAS set out plans for training and development across all communities. However, OIC raised concerns about the capacity of the SAS to be able to guarantee their ability to deliver their statutory responsibilities to island groups. Concerns were raised about the volunteer workforce and the sustainability of this.

An Air ambulance procurement exercise is about to be launched and so it was also discussed with SAS about the possibility of moving an Air Ambulance base to Orkney to serve Orkney, Shetland and the north of Scotland. Partners to think about whether the CPP wish to have a position on this topic and bring to the EG and put on the agenda.

## **10. Carers' Conference**

Stephen Brown told the group that in a recent Scottish Health and Wellbeing Survey, at last count, Orkney was the second best performing in the Country in relation to the percentage of carers who agreed that they felt supported to continue in their caring role. In principle this sounds great, however, the figure was 43%. Recent estimates suggest there may be as many as 4000 unpaid

carers across Orkney Islands and the challenge is how to strengthen the workforce but at the same time support those unpaid carers.

The response to the recent Carers' Conference was very impressive and key themes emerging were:

- Finance, and some of the challenges that unpaid carers face.
- Absence of respite resources in particular, flexible approaches to respite.
- Flexibility of employers to allow people to maintain their job and their responsibility towards people who require care.

These themes are being collated into a draft carers strategy which can be brought to the CPP for further discussion.

Laura Skaife-Knight thanked Stephen and team for the carers conference.

## **11. Single Islands Authority**

A report was circulated prior to the meeting and Karen Greaves went through this giving a brief history about the Single Authority Model (SAM) and the challenges it has faced over the past decade.

Post covid, dialogue on the Local Governance Review (LGR) recommenced in January 2023 and Scottish Ministers have shown a particular interest in revisiting the SAM, now rebadged the Single Island Authority (SIA). The report details next steps about how conversations can commence and explore this prior to any further participation with the Scottish Government.

Laura wanted to note that in the report it states that NHS Orkney agreed to the model in 2018/2019 but that this was not the case. Karen replied by saying that the NHS Chief Executive and the Chair were very supportive of the model when it came through the Partnership Board and believed it had been taken to the NHSO board. Regardless of the past it was felt that it was important to work together to develop next steps and the best way forward. Karen told the group that report details next steps and that there is an NHSO and OIC meeting with Chief Executives and how this is taken forward with respective boards and Elected Members. Karen also suggested this be taken to the next Executive Group meeting.

## **12. Delivery Group and Task Force reports from Interim Chairs**

### **12.1 Sustainable Recovery Delivery Group**

Kristopher Leask provided an update and at the last meeting there were updates, presentations and monitoring of the ongoing delivery plan. He has also provided an update on the Islands Centre for Net Zero and hope a representative can attend a delivery group meeting in the future.

A Community Wealth Building Group meeting is set to meet soon to decide how best to move forward and will engage with the Executive Group to discuss options and funding. Kristopher re-iterated that Community wealth building is something that needs to be worked on by all partners.

Procurement is a core pillar of community wealth building and so Kristopher said that group that the Councils Procurement Strategy consultation opened and will close on 31 July 2023, and it is likely a draft response will be circulated for comment and asks that everyone engages with that.

### **12.2 Cost of Living Task Force**

A workshop was held followed by a follow up meeting. The three key strategies of the group are the child poverty, food dignity and fuel poverty. Gaps were discussed such as people with disabilities, the working poor, people who have moved to Orkney, those on low incomes and life crises. It was agreed that there is a need to broaden the demographic to include disabled and older people, more focus on households rather than families, building a capacity for early and crisis intervention, how physical assets and cultural community assets can be more efficiently utilised and removing barriers to employment.

James Stockan commented on the excellent work that has been done and asked what approach works best in terms of if OIC has an opportunity to help financially again.

Craig indicated that the approach is right by giving a cash first approach.

### **12.3 Local Equality Delivery Group**

A workshop was held on 9 June with more attendees than last time, and the group went through the main aims and to identify issues such as:

- Transport and Infrastructure.
- Access to health and care services.
- Housing.

### **13. Any other business**

Heather thanked James for all the work he had done up to this point.

### **14. Date of next meeting**

26 September 2023. George has asked if anyone has any items for the agenda for the next meeting to contact him.

A discussion was held around the meeting being blended, in person or Teams meetings. A varied opinion was present. Oliver suggested that one option could be to have one full in person meeting per year.

The meeting closed at 12:32.