**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Highland Council remains committed to delivering efficiency savings and service improvement through collaboration and shared service arrangements. The Programme for the Highland Council – Working Together for the Highlands 2012-2017 supports the Council’s commitment to achieving positive outcomes for its residents and communities and to work in partnership to deliver improvements across the Highlands. Collaboration and shared services is integral to achieving this ambition.

1.2 The Highland Single Outcome Agreement 2, National Outcome 15, also states that *our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to people’s needs*. The indicators for the delivery of this outcome are detailed in the Highland Single Outcome Agreement, and include a commitment, from all partners, to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services in the Highlands.

1.3 The Council’s Corporate Improvement Programme and Integration with Health has ensured a continued focus on identifying and progressing opportunities for collaboration and shared services. The Council continues to engage with public sector partners, through the Highland Community Planning Partnership, and with councils and other public sector partners within the wider Highlands & Islands and North East of Scotland to identify opportunities for shared services.

1.4 This paper provides an update of the current status of projects to develop collaboration and shared services.

**2.0 Current Progress**

2.1 **NHS Highland**

The Highland Council has well developed joint working in place with NHS Highland and in 2011 the Council and NHSH agreed to the integration of adult and children’s services, delivered by the Council, with services provided by the health service. Adopting a Lead Agency Model the Council and NHS in Highland achieved this integration of services on 1 April 2012 and this became the first example of integration using a Lead Agency Model in Scotland. Integration resulted in some 1400 staff have been transferred over to health including social workers and Care at Home staff, and 200 staff being transferred to the Council.

Since April last year the Council has delivered Integrated Children’s Services, commissioned by NHSH. Similarly NHSH now deliver Integrated Adult Services, commissioned by Highland Council. Robust governance arrangements have been put in place to ensure scrutiny of the new service delivery models and to ensure positive outcomes are
delivered for service users.

The Programme has now moved into a new phase – Integrated Care in the Highlands – with a joint programme overseeing a number projects to deliver the transformation of services to the fully integrated models and to deliver greater collaboration between the support services, managed by the Council and NHS. The scope of the Support Services programme includes property, ICT, Information Sharing, HR and public relations.

2.2 Northern Constabulary

Shared service arrangements have been in place between Northern Constabulary and Highland Council e.g. procurement and payroll, for a number of years.

More recently in 2011 a review of customer services, at Highland Council, identified the opportunity to co-located and share premises for council service points and police stations in 6 communities. This collaboration enabled both organisations to achieve efficiency savings and supported the continued expansion of services to remote and rural communities.

Further to the success of this partnership the Council transferred its Out of Hours call handling to Northern Constabulary in 2012. Calls for Transport, Environmental and Community Services and Housing are now taken at the Force Operations Centre. This collaboration has been successful in delivering efficiency savings for the Council and in improving Out of Hours services to residents. At the same time out of hour calls for Social Work Services moved to NHSH.

The Council has already started discussions with the Scottish Police Service to promote the continuation of these shared service arrangements in the Highlands.

2.3 Children’s Panel – Area Support Teams

The Children’s Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 will put in place new arrangements from June 2013 to support the children’s hearing system across Scotland. Children’s Hearing Scotland will be responsible for ensuring a consistent approach across the country and for the recruitment and training of panel members. New Area Support Teams (ASTs) are being established and local councils are continuing to provide support for these new arrangements.

Previously Highland and Moray Councils have had separate arrangements but a decision has been made to establish one Area Support Team to support both the Highland and Moray Children’s Panels. It is proposed to use a Lead Agency Model with the Clerk being employed to manage a small team delivering services across the two local authority areas.
### 2.3 Pathfinder North

Pathfinder North project is a collaborative programme which has implemented and delivered managed high speed broadband services to five local authority areas across the Highlands and Islands (Highland, Moray, Argyll and Bute, Orkney and Shetland). The five local authorities formed a consortium to undertake the procurement, with support and funding from Scottish Government. The Highland Council is the Lead Authority for the programme and the partnership has invested £68 million to improved services.

The services delivered by Pathfinder North have delivered direct benefits to local authorities by enabling high bandwidth connections for schools, libraries and other Council offices throughout the Highlands and Islands. This has ensured connectivity in communities to which the private sector would not delivered services without public investment.

The contract for these services will end in March 2014 and the partnership has recently made the decision to extend the current contract to March 2016. The delivery of Next Generation Broadband services to these councils, after March 2016, will be through the national SWAN Vanguard project and the Pathfinder North Partnership continues to work collaboratively not only within the region but now with public sector partners across Scotland to achieve a Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) to sustain the efficient delivery of public services.

### 2.4 Business Gateway

Since April 2009 Highland Council has managed Business Gateway through a shared service arrangement with Moray Council. Highland Opportunities, an enterprise trust established by Highland Council, delivers Business Gateway for both councils.

### 2.5 Highland Housing Register

A partnership of the Highland Council and registered social landlords, with housing stock in the Highland Council area, have developed a shared housing allocations policy and IT system so that all applications for housing are dealt with consistently, in order to make it easier for customers to apply for housing.
### 2.6 Customer Services

Highland Council has a network of 35 Service Points and a Service Centre, dealing with telephone and email enquiries, which provide front-line customer services to residents. The Service was awarded the Customer Services Excellence Award in 2009 & 2012.

In many areas service points also provide Registration Services and have been merged with local libraries to provide a model of sustainable service delivery to more rural communities. The Council also has shared service arrangements, in some locations, with Visit Scotland and the Passport Office.

The Service has also developed effective collaboration with Northern Constabulary in some communities and for the provision of Out of Hours Services (as detailed at 2.2).

### 2.7 Hub North Scotland

The Highland Council has played a leading role in the establishment of Hub North Scotland Ltd – a joint venture between the local authorities, health boards, police, fire and ambulance services in the north of Scotland. Together with our private sector development partner, Alba, we are working to improve the procurement and development of community infrastructure facilities. For Highland Council this currently involves two large schools projects in Wick and Inverness.

### 2.8 Highland Public Sector Property Group

The public sector organisations involved in the Community Planning Partnership have established a Property Group. This Group shares plans, information and resources. It seeks opportunities to rationalise the public sector property portfolio in the North. Under the Chairmanship of the Council’s Director of Housing and Property, the Group has made good progress and now includes representation from a wider group of organisations, including Job Centre Plus, Forestry Commission and the Scottish Court Service.

### 2.9 Financial Services

The Highland Council shares a number of its financial services and systems with other Councils and public sector partners, including:

- **Internal Audit** - Provision of computer audit services to Western Isles Council and Orkney Islands Council. The Council also shares use of its audit management system with Western Isles Council;
- **Insurance** - Allocating insurance premiums for Argyll & Bute Council and administering community insurance schemes for Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council, Angus Council, Argyll &
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<td>• Council Tax - Direct Debit and Council Tax Benefit promotions with Moray Council and Scottish Water;</td>
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<td>• Corporate Finance - Local Government Pension Scheme Pathfinder Project;</td>
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<td>• Accounting - Accountancy Services and I.S. Services to the Police, Fire and Valuation and pension administration for 36 external bodies.</td>
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