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# NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

8 December 2021

## North Ayrshire Council

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Highlands &amp; Islands Regional Economic Partnership</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	To provide the Council with an overview of the developing proposals for a Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	That the Council: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) agrees to participate in the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership;</li><li>b) notes that by participating in the proposed Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership, North Ayrshire Council will help shape and refine the proposed operating and governance arrangements; and</li><li>c) agrees (i) to appoint the Cabinet Member for Post-Covid Renewal and the Islands as the Council's representative on the Partnership and (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make officer appointments to the Partnership</li></ul>

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## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government is committed to establishing Regional Economic Partnerships (REP) across all of Scotland. The broad objectives of REPs are to bring regional interests together to help drive economic growth through the alignment of resources and through collaborations between Government, agencies, academia and the private sector.
- 1.2 In 2018, the three Ayrshire Councils agreed to implement a new Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership governance structure to oversee the delivery of the Ayrshire Growth Deal and to promote the objectives of the Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership to achieve a step change in the performance of the Ayrshire economy and its contribution to the national economy.
- 1.3 It is proposed that a Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP) is established to focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth and build resilience throughout the region, by identifying and focussing on areas of joint strategic purpose to provide co-ordinated action in pursuit of regional growth opportunities and to address shared challenges.

By participating in the proposed Highlands and Islands REP, North Ayrshire representatives will be able to play an active role in shaping and refining its purpose and terms of reference.

- 1.4 Council representation on the HIREP will be required at senior political and officer level.

## **2. Background**

2.1 There is currently no dedicated Regional Economic Partnership for the Highlands and Islands region and the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (COHI) agreed that Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) should undertake initial work to scope out proposals and draft terms of reference for the establishment of a Highlands and Islands REP.

2.2 The Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership's (HIREP) proposed purpose is to enable inclusive and sustainable economic growth and build resilience throughout the region, by identifying and focussing on areas of joint strategic purpose to provide co-ordinated action in pursuit of regional growth opportunities and to address shared challenges. It is considered that the HIREP can complement and add value to the work of existing local authority area groupings by enabling a co-ordination of approach across shared opportunities and challenges and facilitating activity across local authority boundaries, where appropriate.

2.4 The HIREP will fulfil its purpose through:

- Identifying opportunities for collaborative and co-ordinated action in pursuit of agreed regional priorities
- Advocating on agreed regional economic opportunities and challenges, and where appropriate leading in discussions with Scottish Government, UK Government and other organisations
- Being future focused in looking ahead to identify emerging regional opportunities and challenges where collaborative action can maximise outcomes and impact.
- Working to understand evolving approaches to external funding and reacting to maximise impact across all parts of the region
- Understanding sub-regional economic dynamics and, where appropriate, formulating solidarity actions to ensure that no part of the Highlands and Islands is left behind

The present draft version of the terms of reference is not yet agreed and will require further negotiation to ensure that all partners agree with the remit of the HIREP, its operating principles and governance procedures. The draft terms of reference will be further refined as the HIREP is established and thereafter referred to Councils for ratification as appropriate. By participating in the proposed HIREP, North Ayrshire representatives will be able to play an active role in shaping and refining the agreed terms of reference. Participation in the HIREP will contribute to strengthening the island voices of the North Ayrshire islands, ensuring the unique challenges and opportunities faced by islanders are reflected in national and local policy.

2.5 Membership of the Highlands and Islands REP is likely to comprise Highlands and Islands Local Authorities, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland, Scottish Funding Council, University of the Highlands and Islands, Nature

Scotland, HITRANS, Private sector representation, Third Sector / Social Economy representation and other agencies to be confirmed e.g. Visit Scotland, Zero Waste Scotland, Scottish Forestry, Crown Estate Scotland.

- 2.6 It is proposed that each Local Authority be represented at senior political and officer level. It is therefore suggested that Council considers appointing the Cabinet Member for Post-Covid Renewal and the Islands to attend the HIREP as the Council's senior political representative and delegates authority to the Chief Executive to attend and/or make officer appointments to the HIREP as appropriate.
- 2.7 North Ayrshire Council is also a member of the Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership with Arran and Cumbrae considered within the geography of the Ayrshire region and within the scope of associated strategic plans and activities. Highlands and Islands Enterprise also attend the Ayrshire REP in recognition of their role in supporting the Arran and Cumbrae economy. Any implications from the overlap between the 2 Regional Economic Partnerships will be kept under review. This is likely to be further informed by the roll out of the new Shared Prosperity Fund and the detail of how that fund will be administered within Scotland and across different geographies.

### **3. Proposals**

3.1 That the Council:

- a) agrees to participate in the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership;
- b) notes that by participating in the proposed Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership, North Ayrshire Council will help shape and refine the proposed operating and governance arrangements; and
- c) agrees to (i) appoint the Cabinet Member for Post-Covid Renewal and the Islands as the Council's political representative on the Partnership and (ii) delegate authority to the Chief Executive to make officer appointments to the Partnership.

### **4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty**

#### **Financial**

4.1 None.

#### **Human Resources**

4.2 None.

#### **Legal**

4.3 None.

#### **Equality/Socio-economic**

4.4 None.

#### **Environmental and Sustainability**

4.5 None.

### **Key Priorities**

4.6 The report covers information relevant to the following Council Plan priorities:

- North Ayrshire has an inclusive, growing and enterprising economy

### **Community Wealth Building**

4.7 Further work will be required to understand the opportunities and impact that a Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership can contribute to delivering Community Wealth Building across the region.

### **5. Consultation**

5.1 Engagement has taken place with the Cabinet Member for Post-Covid Renewal and the Islands and Senior Officers.

**CRAIG HATTON**  
Chief Executive

For further information please contact Craig Hatton, Chief Executive on 01294 324124 .

### **Background Papers**

None