



**COMMUNITIES ENGAGEMENT WITH COMHAIRLE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Report by Chief Officer

**PURPOSE**

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to provide an outline of engagement between communities and the leadership of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar.

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 2.1 In October 2023, it was agreed that a series of ward visits should be undertaken to encourage dialogue around budget priorities and to hear directly from communities. A schedule of visits was agreed in conjunction with local elected members, some of whom provided an insight into the ward areas, prior to the meetings with invited community representatives.
- 2.2 Each meeting followed a similar agenda including Corporate Strategy; Budgets; Single Island Authority model and Our Work-Your Comhairle initiative along with hearing directly about community initiatives.
- 2.3 The meetings were supported by Community Learning and Development personnel who provided a summary of points raised. Community members who attended agreed that it was useful to engage with the leader over current issues and it was agreed that an annual schedule of meetings would be set.
- 2.4 The findings of the visits are contained as an appendix to the Report.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the Report.**

Contact Officer: Fiona MacInnes-Begg, Chief Executive's Department  
Appendix: Findings of the Visits  
Background Papers: Ward Visit Summaries

## IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

<b>Resource Implications</b>	<b>Implications/None</b>
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
<b>Strategic Implications</b>	<b>Implications/None</b>
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	Ensure local people and communities are empowered and are at the heart of our decision making.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

## BACKGROUND

5.1 In October 2023, it was agreed that a series of ward visits should be undertaken to encourage dialogue around budget priorities and to hear directly from communities about what should be supported moving forward.

## DETAIL

6.1 The majority of ward meetings took place in Nov/Dec 2023, predominantly in the north, with others happening later in 2024. Invites were sent out to local community groups encouraging representatives to attend. A wide variety of topics were discussed and sharing of information for the benefit of both communities and members, ensued.

6.2 There was general agreement across ward areas that the Corporate Strategy reflected the key areas for change. One omission noted that climate change hadn't been captured.

6.3 In terms of budget discussions, most areas felt that social care required protecting along with education and winter maintenance for roads.

6.4 Opportunities for young people, both in terms of support via youth clubs/groups and employment opportunities were also noted for protection from cuts.

6.5 Positive suggestions with regard to the budgets were also made with the mention of Community Benefit Clauses being sought for windfarm developments along with a Tourist Tax for cruise ships, given the new deep water port developments. An energy tariff for Western Isles communities was also raised for further exploration along with expansion of the spaceport development in North Uist.

6.6 A review of the meetings indicated that the engagement process had been very useful and communities valued the opportunity to speak directly with the Leader. It was agreed that the process should be repeated on an ongoing basis, where possible.

## CONCLUSION

7.1 The Committee should note the Report and consider the comments from communities as part of the budget setting process.