

**WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE HIGHLANDS
2012-17**

Ag obair còmhla airson na Gàidhealtachd

Corporate Plan for the Highland Council

Foreword

Ro-ràdh

This five year Corporate Plan for the Highland Council sets out the ambitious programme 'Working together for the Highlands' and it shows how we will resource it and measure our progress in delivering it.

When we launched our programme in June 2012 we stated our commitment to work hard over the five years to stand up for the Highlands, and to provide every support for our varied and vibrant communities. We reaffirm this commitment and have already seen progress in the key areas of the programme that covers:

- the economy;
- children and young people;
- caring communities;
- better infrastructure;
- better housing; empowering communities; and
- strong and safe communities.

We continue to enjoy strong working relationships with the Scottish Government and partner agencies to deliver the programme. In 2013 we will negotiate a new agreement across public service providers and the Scottish Government. This will be our Single Outcome Agreement for Highland and it will set out how together we will not only grow the economy of the Highlands, but also make sure the benefits are shared more widely across our communities.

We are well aware of the budget challenges for our public services and we will continue to find better ways of making every pound of public money go farther. We will invest more in some areas to reduce costs later and we will adopt new ways of working with partners, communities, individuals and the Scottish Government to make best use of the public resources available.

We look forward to reporting how we are delivering the Programme.

PHOTO

Depute Leader

Leader

Convener

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Introduction

This plan covers the period 2012-17. It contains 129 separate commitments to support economic growth, care and support children, young people and older people, improve the infrastructure of the Highlands, develop more and better housing, empower communities and to have strong and safe Highland communities. These are the commitments made in the Council's programme 'Working together for the Highlands'.

How these commitments will be delivered is set out in the service plans of each of the Council's seven services. These are refreshed each year. In addition the plan includes three commitments that apply to all Council services. These relate to the Council's support for the Gaelic language and implementing the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16; demonstrating how the Council contributes to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration; and treating people fairly and with respect by implementing the Fairer Highland Plan as part of the Council's legal duties from the Equality Act (2010).

The Council's programme is ambitious. It will continue to develop the Highlands as a thriving region in Scotland which has experienced double the rate of population growth in the country over the past 10 years, with the population at 232,000 (Census 2011).

To sustain this growth, new economic opportunities and potential will be supported. These will be appropriate for the outstanding natural environment of the Highlands, covering a third of the Scottish landmass. The benefits of the growth will also be shared more widely with services paying particular attention to people requiring more support to access the labour market and especially for young people.

Council services will also continue to adapt by seeking new and better ways of serving the public and keeping costs down. The new integrated way of working with NHS Highland in providing care and support for older people and children with care needs is the first of its kind in Scotland. Focusing more on preventative services and investing earlier to avoid costs later is another new approach supported by new and additional funding.

The Council is committed to community empowerment and renewal with nearly a third of the programme commitments focusing on the Council being more accessible, improving participation, supporting communities to do more for themselves and to let people have more of a say about their communities and the public services in them.

The period of this Plan will also require new ways of working with other public service providers, notably with the new national bodies for police and fire services, so that the people of the Highlands can continue to enjoy their relatively safe environment.

Recognising that others have an important role in improving the quality life in the Highlands, the Council will work with partners locally and with the Scottish Government and set out in a Single Outcome Agreement (by mid-2013) what each organisation will do:

- to support economic recovery and growth;
- to help people into employment;

- to ensure children are safe, healthy and cared for from their early years;
- to value and care for older people;
- to tackle the significant health inequalities across the region and encourage physical activity;
- to keep the region safe and strong and continue to reduce re-offending;
- to make the most of the Highland environment.

The Agreement will also provide contextual information, describing the current situation and challenges as well as the opportunities in the Highlands. The 16 national outcomes all public service providers work towards are listed below.

1. We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place to do business in Europe
2. We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people
3. We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation
4. Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
5. Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
6. We live longer, healthier lives
7. We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society
8. We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk
9. We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger
10. We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
13. We take pride in a strong fair and inclusive national identity
14. We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production
15. Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it.
16. Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

The Council's programme will support the Agreement, with the work done in the first year of the programme providing a sound basis for taking the Agreement forward.

This Corporate Plan sets out how the Council will monitor its progress in delivering every commitment in the programme. Annual reports will be published to demonstrate the progress being made and these will be reviewed by external audit and inspection bodies. The Council welcomes this challenge and will be open and honest about its performance, making improvements where needed. As the programme is progressed, actions and performance indicators will be reviewed to make sure performance continues to improve.

We will also continue to ask the general public how they feel about Council services by surveying our Citizens' Panel and listening to focus groups. This is in addition to particular consultations and dialogue with people about particular services, for example through Parent Forums in schools, at Ward Forums with individuals and community groups, with business

through the Economic Forum and with environmental groups through the Environment Forum. As one of the largest employers in the region, we will also involve staff in identifying how services can be improved through our programmes of self-evaluation.

Some of the Council's commitments relate to its lobbying activity with Scottish and UK Governments and with the European Union. These commitments are highlighted in the following pages (marked with 'L') and the Council will report on the action it has taken as well as the progress it is making in these areas.

The Plan also includes information on how the Council's budget is allocated to support the delivery of the programme. The Council has listened to the views of the public in identifying where to make savings. This will be an on-going process as further savings are needed into the future.

1: Working together for the economy

Ag obair còmhla airson an eaconamaidh

The Highland Council will prioritise and support the creation of jobs in the Highlands. Our commitments for the economy are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 1.1 The Council will produce a comprehensive economic recovery and development plan, detailing a strategy for growth.
This was agreed by the PED Committee in January 2013.
- 1.2 The Council introduced a living wage of at least £7.45 per hour for all council staff by April 1st, 2013, helping the lowest paid.
- 1.3 The Council will prioritise and protect frontline staff, to maintain standards of service delivery and provide stability to the Highland economy. We will do all we can to avoid compulsory redundancies. *We will monitor and report on the number of redeployments, early retirements, posts deleted for efficiencies and redundancies.*
- 1.4 The Council will prioritise and support the creation of quality jobs in the Highlands. We will encourage local enterprise initiatives, invest locally, and support key industries. *With partners we have a target of creating or safeguarding 5000 jobs. We will monitor the number of clients in the renewables and life sciences sectors supported through Business Gateway.*
- 1.5 The Council will continue to be transparent in awarding contracts, and fair and efficient in settling our bills.
We will pay 60% of invoices within 10 calendar days of receipt and 90% within 30 calendar days. We will increase our total direct spend with Highland businesses by 5% by 2017 and with Highland Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by 5% by 2017.
- 1.6 The Council will support small businesses and Highland entrepreneurs with advice and finance through Highland Opportunities Ltd and Business Gateway. *We will monitor and report on the number of start-up and growth businesses supported by Business Gateway and the number of existing businesses receiving advice, information or training.*
- 1.7 Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will continue to support and promote the Small Business Bonus Scheme.
We will maintain the number of businesses supported.
- 1.8 The Council will work with partners to produce a social enterprise strategy for the Highlands. *This will be produced for June 2013.*
- 1.9 The Council will promote and support local food production and continue our support for Fairtrade. *We submitted an application for Fairtrade Zone Status for the Highlands of Scotland and reviewed the action plan on supporting local food before December 2012.*

- 1.10 Working with the Scottish Government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and private sector partners, the Council will maximise the tourism potential of the Highland area. The Council will review how the Council's cash support for tourism is allocated, working with partners to ensure appropriate and effective support is offered to promote our unique Highland identities, traditional sports and culture (including shinty, curling and our Highland games), and varied communities. Opportunities in destination-tourism, green tourism, and the Gaelic language will continue to be explored.
- We will increase the value of tourism by 4% per annum; demonstrate a successful Royal National Mod in Inverness in 2014; increase the number of participants and visitors attending the Royal National Mod and its associated activities when the events take place in the Highlands; work with Comunn na Gàidhlig to develop and support relevant sporting activities, e.g. football and shinty through the medium of Gaelic; negotiate the hosting of the Traditional Music Awards in the Highlands during the lifespan of the Plan; develop Gaelic further in the Highlands of Scotland Film Commission business area; Build and develop on the Council's agreement with VisitScotland in the promotion of the Highlands' distinct culture; including featuring Gaelic in marketing campaigns; and review into the Council's tourism spend by January 2013.*
- 1.11 The Council will work with the Cairngorms National Park Authority to support them to develop the valuable role they play in the wider Highland environment and economy.
- We will support a 15% increase in visitor numbers to the Cairngorm National Park and increase the value of tourism in the Cairngorms National Park in line with the targets in the Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism strategy.*
- 1.12 The Council will work with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the Scottish Council for Development & Industry and statutory infrastructure providers to promote and develop the Highland area as one of the most attractive environments to do business in Scotland.
- We will increase the proportion of non-householder planning applications that were dealt with within two months; invest fully the budget received to remediate vacant and derelict land in 2012/13; increase the hectares of vacant and derelict land remediated including sites accessed for future use in 2012/13; monitor the number of environmental projects delivered; and promote and pursue inward investment opportunities with HIE and Scottish Development International.*
- 1.13 The Council will review Council procedures, including procurement, to ensure that contracts are drawn up so as to maximise the opportunities for local business.
- In addition to increasing by 5% the total direct spend with Highland businesses and SMEs, procurement procedures were reviewed by March 2013 and will be reported to Committee.*
- 1.14 Working with the Scottish and UK Governments, the Council will investigate means whereby resources currently held by pension funds can be invested for the overall benefit of the people of the Highlands. *This was progressed by March 2013 and will be reported to the Investment sub-committee.*
- 1.15 The Council will support and invest in appropriate opportunities presented by renewable energy, particularly wave and tidal power. We will continue to develop the Highlands as a centre for research & development, fabrication and engineering.
- We will increase installed capacity of renewable energy to 2908 MW by 2017 and have three demonstrated wave & tidal projects to be implemented by March 2017.*

- 1.16 The Council will seek to identify means whereby communities can participate in and benefit from the development of renewable energy across the Highlands.
We will monitor and report on the number of developments in Highland that pay community benefit, the number of developments in Highland that pay community benefit through the council policy and the number of communities receiving community benefit from renewables.
- 1.17 The Council will continue to support Highland-wide, large-scale employment growth opportunities in the Cromarty Firth (Invergordon, Highland Deephaven and Nigg Energy Park), Scrabster Enterprise Area, Ardersier and Kishorn and in the UHI Campus development.
We will prepare planning guidance of enterprise areas (Scrabster, Nigg & UHI Campus) and increase the % of people in employment in Cromarty Firth (Invergordon, Highland Deephaven and Nigg Energy Park), Scrabster Enterprise Area, Ardersier and Kishorn by 50% by 2017.
- 1.18 The Council will continue to work with private and public sector partners to promote the Highlands' ports and harbours.
We will increase the number of cruise liner visits to Highland ports (Scrabster, Ullapool, Portree, Fort William, Invergordon) to 130 by 2015 and support a 50% employment increase in major ports -Inverness, Invergordon, Wick, Scrabster by 2017.
- 1.19 The Council recognises the world-class skills of the workforce of Dounreay. We will work with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Dounreay Babcock Partnership, the Scottish and UK Governments and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to ensure Caithness and North Sutherland reap maximum social, community benefits from the decommissioning process.
We will report on the annual target of 100 jobs (to counter the job losses arising from nuclear decommissioning) and on maintaining income and public services in Caithness and North Sutherland.
- 1.20 The Council will prioritise the publication of a youth employment strategy.
In 2012 we developed and are implementing a Youth Employment Strategy. We will develop a 16+ Strategy which will support the Youth Employment Strategy.
- 1.21 Working with private and public sector partners, the Scottish and UK Governments, the Council will aim to ensure every 16-19 year old seeking employment has the opportunity to access a modern apprenticeship or further training.
We will work with partners and increase the number of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment by 3% per annum.
- 1.22 L¹ The Council will work with the Highlands and Islands European Partnership and the Scottish and UK Governments to secure maximum benefit for the Highlands from the EU funding programmes for 2014-20, including further transitional funding, and participate actively in key European organisations.
We will produce positive annual reports on EU funding for the region from 2007-13 programmes and demonstrate active lobbying for a new transitional EU programme from 2014-20.

¹ 'L' identifies the commitment as a lobbying commitment. The Council's lobbying activities as well as the influence they have will be monitored and reported.

- 1.23 The Council will work with the UK and Scottish Governments, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and telecommunications companies to seek to provide Highland homes and businesses with broadband, 3G, 4G and mobile telephony services fit for the 21st century. We will continue to support innovative and community-based schemes to drive delivery.
We will measure progress against agreed milestones, work with HIE to increase the number of community broadband schemes implemented and lobby for Scottish Government & UK spend on next generation broadband.
- 1.24 Working with Scottish Government and other agencies the Council will undertake a review of service delivery to remote and rural communities and identify a sustainable level of support necessary for the provision of services.
A plan for taking this forward will be developed in 2013 and it will include learning from new research supported by the Council into rural incomes and prices.
- 1.25 The Council will seek to support the development of our urban centres, and put local communities at the forefront of these processes. Working with the Scottish Government, we will ensure that Inverness and the wider region realise the benefits of the 'Seven Cities Strategy'.
The Inner Moray Firth development plan will be adopted by March 2014 and the local development plans for the West Highlands and Islands and Caithness and Sutherland will be adopted. Six projects will be delivered as part of the 'Seven Cities Strategy' by 2017.
- 1.26 The Council wishes to see Crown Estate revenues directed to local coastal communities and management of the estate transferred from Crown Estate Commissioners to the Scottish Parliament and local communities, as appropriate. The Council will continue to make a case for the review of the management and income derived from the Crown Estate.
We will work with UK & Scottish Governments to deliver devolution of Crown Estate powers.
- 1.27 The Council will maintain its commitment to land reform.
We will work with Community Land Scotland, HIE and the Scottish Government to increase land in community ownership.
- 1.28 The Council will work to tackle fuel poverty in the Highlands.
We will monitor and report progress made on Affordable Warmth Action Plan action and increase the proportion of the council's housing stock meeting energy efficiency standards as part of achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015.
- 1.29 The Council will work with partners to campaign for fair fuel prices across the Highlands.
We will work with UK & Scottish Government and work with partners to support the retention of petrol stations in fragile areas.
- 1.30 The Council wishes to see a fairer system of local taxation than the current Council Tax and will work with both Scottish and UK Governments to achieve this.
Lobbying actions and progress will be monitored and reported.

In our efforts to support the Highland economy, the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will do this by implementing the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

In developing a Highland recovery plan, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

We will demonstrate how we do this in our annual report to the Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

In supporting the Highland economy, the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

2: Working together for our children & young people

Ag obair còmhla airson ar cloinn agus ar n-òigridh

We will work to ensure the best possible quality of life for children and young people in the Highlands. Every young person living in the Highlands should have access to the best education and training system we can deliver. That is why we will tailor a system that allows all young people of all skill sets to stay in the Highlands at every stage of their study and training.

Our commitments for children and young people are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 2.1 The Council aims to 'Get it Right for Every Child' in the Highlands and to tackle inequality early. In doing so, we will develop our pioneering integration work of children's services with NHS Highland.
We will: reduce the number of children on the child protection register who have been registered previously; conduct a review of child's plans showing they are fit for purpose against the framework; increase year on year the number of integrated teams set around associated school groups until all are covered; and provide evidence that Child's Plans have the agreement of all partners.
- 2.2 The Council will ensure that every child aged 3-4, and every looked after child aged 2 in the Highlands will have access to 600 flexible learning and childcare hours, in line with the Scottish Government's coming Children's Services Bill.
We will implement 600 hours/year flexible childcare and early learning.
- 2.3 The Council will implement the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework, and continue support for wraparound childcare across the Highlands.
We will: increase the number of parents accessing parenting groups and programmes; provide wraparound childcare in every associated school group; implement 600 hours/year flexible childcare and early learning; increase immunisation uptake rates of MMR1 for 5 year olds; increase to 36% new-born babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 weeks review; ensure the allocation of Health Plan Indicator at 6wks from birth; Improve BMI at P1 and P7.
- 2.4 The Council will work with communities to identify innovative and affordable solutions to nursery provision. Where appropriate support will be given to establish co-operative provision.
We will implement 600 hours/year flexible childcare and early learning and increase the level of funding routed to childcare & early learning via community groups.
- 2.5 Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will ensure that teachers and head teachers have access to the necessary support and resources to continue to deliver the experiences and learning outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence.
We will review and update annually the Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Plan and ensure alignment of teachers continuing professional development (CPD) with CfE outcome requirements.
- 2.6 The Council will seek to maintain and build on high educational standards across the Highlands.

We will: ensure alignment of teachers CPD with CfE outcome requirements; maintain educational tariff scores for S4 pupils (cumulative); maintain educational tariff scores for S5 pupils (cumulative); maintain educational tariff scores for S6 pupils (cumulative); at least maintain 95% of schools inspected and receiving satisfactory or better Education Scotland inspection reports; and ensure a systematic monitoring & tracking system for 3-15 years pupil progress is in place.

- 2.7 Opportunities for those with a learning or physical disability, or those who are at a social disadvantage, will be provided so that every child is offered an educational experience best suited to their needs.
We will: further develop individualised support to maximise number of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) who are able to sustain full-time school attendance; ensure all children with additional learning needs have a Child's Plan; improve the quality of handover of planning and support arrangements for young people with continuing needs into adulthood by March 2013; increase the percentage of young people reporting their learning environment as positive from the Education Scotland inspections; develop staff training around attachment, resilience, and child development; and within the framework of CfE ensure programmes are tailored to meet individual needs.
- 2.8L The Council will work with the Scottish Government to continue to develop an ambitious 10-year capital programme to provide modern schools in the Highlands. We are determined to ensure the completion of the current school buildings programme.
We will continue to implement the outcomes of the sustainable school estate review within the capital funds allocated and deliver the defined capital programme for the school estate.
- 2.9 The Council will work for the very best standards as corporate parents for all children in our care, helping them reach their full potential and play an active part in Highland life, beyond care.
We will: ensure 100% statutory health assessments are done within 4 weeks of becoming looked after; increase the proportion of children who are looked after at home; increase in the number of children who need to live away from the family home, but can be supported in kinship care; have fewer placement moves when children are looked after; reduce the length of time it takes between permanency decisions and matching (time taken in months between decisions for permanency and matching with permanent carers); support looked after children develop personal interests and hobbies; increase the number of looked after children supported through the Family Firm scheme; have fewer looked after children in out of authority placements; ensure that within the framework of CfE, programmes are tailored to meet individual needs; and deliver a programme of school facility improvement to meet individual needs as they arise.
- 2.10 The Council will provide for two school periods of physical activity every week for S1-S4 pupils. By 2014, we will ensure that all primary school children enjoy at least two hours of physical activity every week.
We will develop and implement a 5-15 Physical Activity Plan for schools to achieve two secondary periods and two hours in primary school of physical activity weekly by March 2014.
- 2.11 The Council will promote energy efficiency in Highland schools, and build on the success of our 'eco schools'.

We will increase the number of early years centres and schools achieving bronze and silver eco schools awards and green flag status. We will increase the % of schools engaged with the energy and waste elements of the Schools Global Footprint Project and explore options to increase investment in children's play facilities each year.

- 2.12 The Council will implement the Highland Play Strategy and maximise the opportunities for children to learn, develop and enjoy through active play.
We will: ensure that play infrastructure meets requirements of the Highlands Play Strategy; implement the Highland Play Strategy; and involve children in the design and development of their school external play space.
- 2.13 The Council will continue to support teachers in their efforts to raise attainment levels in literacy and numeracy at all levels. We will work to maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.
We will: at least maintain 95% of schools inspected and receiving satisfactory or better Education Scotland inspection reports; use Assessment for Excellence data to inform teachers professional judgement; and ensure alignment of teachers CPD with CfE outcome requirements.
- 2.14 The Council will introduce a training programme, so that parents, parent forums and parent councils are more aware of their rights, powers and responsibilities, and are able to make a substantive contribution to the life and work of their school.
We will complete engagement with parents through Parent Councils on the development of a Highland Parent network. We will develop & implement a training programme for parents & school managers on rights, powers & responsibilities designed to ensure positive parental engagement in the education process.
- 2.15 Gaelic Medium Education will continue to develop and expand at all levels. The Council will also support teaching staff as they encourage new Gaelic learners.
We will increase the number of Gaelic work placements under the Sgeama Greis Gnìomhachais by 50% by 2017 and identify Gaelic community development activities within Associated School Groups, to compliment and link with formal Gaelic education provision.
- 2.16 The Council will enhance services for children who need extra support, including implementation of the role of 'Pupil Support Assistant', investing further in social care, and ensuring a more personalised approach.
We will: invest an additional £250k to improve social care services for children with disabilities 2012/13; increase the number of children & families receiving a Self-Directed Support package; reduce the number of children with Additional Support Needs who are not in school full time; ensure all children with additional learning needs have a Child's Plan; effective quality of handover of planning and support arrangements for young people with continuing needs into adulthood. In addition, by March 2013, we aim for no young person to wait longer than 26 weeks for access to a Primary Mental Health Worker. We will reduce waiting times for Allied Health Professional Services, increase the percentage of young people reporting their learning environment as positive and implement the Pupil Support Assistant post.
- 2.17 By effectively and efficiently utilising new technology, the Council will promote a wide choice of subjects for pupils, in line with the Curriculum for Excellence.
We will develop a 16+ Strategy which will support the Youth Employment Strategy and through engaging with colleges & UHI provide a wider range of courses on-line

for senior students.

- 2.18 In line with the Scottish Government's commitment the Council will work to find innovative ways to introduce children to modern languages and Gaelic from an early age.
We will implement the Scottish Government's approach to language teaching.
- 2.19 As part of our preventative spend agenda, the Council will commit an additional £1m each year for early years services and families. We will fully utilise funds available from the Scottish Government's Early Years Change Fund.
We will allocate an additional £1m each year for early years services and families and allocate investment to achieve increased support and earlier assessment and intervention for very young children.
- 2.20 The Council will work with NHS Highland to achieve public health targets for breast feeding, immunisations and healthy weight, and to address smoking and substance misuse.
We will: increase immunisation uptake rates of MMR1 for 5 year olds; increase to 36% new-born babies exclusively breastfed at the 6-8 weeks review; ensure the allocation of Health Plan Indicator at 6wks from birth; achieve 641 interventions for child healthy weight intervention programme for 2-15 year olds over 3 years ending March 2014; improve Body Mass Index (BMI) at P1 and P7; and reduce the proportion of 13 & 15 year olds self-reporting smoking, using alcohol and using drugs in the last week.
- 2.21 The Council will continue to encourage activities and services for pupils beyond the traditional school day.
We will maintain the number of children and young people taking part in recognised leadership and achievement awards (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Sports Leaders, Youth Achievement Award) and develop & implement an outdoor learning strategy.
- 2.22 Working with our many partners, the Council will seek to expand access to culture and the arts across the Highlands, and implement the Council's culture strategy.
We will maintain positive customer feedback on Blas Festival between 60-80%; maintain support for the Feis movement; and report on a successful Royal National Mod in Inverness in 2014.
- 2.23 Working with Highlife Highland, the Council will continue to ensure that a youth worker is active in every Associated School Group Area.
A youth worker will be active in every Associated School Group.
- 2.24 The Council will provide more safe cycle tracks and 'walk to school' pathways where appropriate, and will encourage healthier and greener methods of travel.
We will increase the number of children walking and cycling to school and increase the number of schools with agreed travel plans.
- 2.25 The Council will continue to roll out a single 'smart' card to all young people by 2013, allowing access to leisure, libraries, arts & cultural activities, youth information and school meals.
A youth worker will be active in every Associated School Group and we will ensure all secondary school pupils have access to the National Entitlement Card (NEC).

- 2.26L The Council will work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Higher Education institutions to address the issues of supply of Gaelic medium teachers. We will continue to seek funding for two new Gaelic medium Primary Schools.
We will monitor our actions and report on progress.
- 2.27 The Council will ensure that all bidders for significant council contracts must provide targeted plans to recruit young unemployed people in the Highlands.
The Housing and Property Service has examined procurement arrangements for major construction projects to maximise the potential for recruitment of young unemployed people by tendering contractors and recommended options by the end of 2012. This work is now progressing. The Council will establish criteria to ensure that all bidders for significant council contracts provide targeted plans to recruit young unemployed people in the Highlands. Council Services will examine the potential for procurement contracts to offer opportunities for recruiting young people.
- 2.28 The Council will introduce a single Children's Champion, to uphold the values of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.
We have a Children's Champion.
- 2.29L The Council will support the UHI as it continues to develop relationships with secondary schools, and as we seek to retain skills in the Highlands. We will maximise the opportunities offered by the new UHI Inverness campus and other UHI colleges across the Highlands, and continue to work with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to further develop its community partnership projects.
We will prepare planning guidance of enterprise areas for the UHI Campus and engage with colleges, Sabahla Mor Ostaig & UHI to provide a wider range of opportunities and on-line courses for senior students.
- 2.30 Working with partners, the Council will play a full part in increasing the number of Gaelic speakers living and working in the Highlands.
We will increase the number undertaking adult Gaelic learning including Ulpan by 20% by March 2016 from a baseline of 200 in 2011/12.
- 2.31 The Council will continue the council's memorandum of understanding with Nova Scotia.
We will increase the number of 0-3 years, nursery school, primary school and secondary school pupils speaking Gaelic and revise the Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia.

In all our efforts to expand training opportunities in the Highlands, the Council commits to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

In developing a first class Highland education system, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

In supporting our children and young people, the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

3. Working together for caring communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan cùramach

We will seek to provide the best quality of life possible for those in need of support. Working with the NHS and those who deliver care on a paid and unpaid basis, we will support a sustainable and service-user led care system for the Highlands.

Our commitments for caring communities are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 3.1 Working with the NHS and other agencies, the Council will continue to deliver the pioneering integration of health and social care services.
We will: create a single point of access to services to be available in every District; reduce the rate of emergency inpatient bed days for people aged 75 and over per 1,000 population; develop strategic and operational commissioning of services for adults within the Lead Agency Model; improve service delivery through service review and redesign; increase the percentage of older adults who had a community care assessment completed within timescale (15 days); reduce Allied Health Professional waiting times; reduce the number of hospital discharges delayed by 4 or more weeks; reduce the number of bed days lost due to delayed discharges; and deliver faster access to mental health services and 18 weeks referral to treatment for Psychological Therapies from December 2014.
- 3.2 The Council will work to alleviate poverty by encouraging benefit uptake and supporting a range of advice services.
We will: at least maintain customer contact levels with CAB from 2011/12 base-line; increase the number of customers reached by the Council's money advice and welfare rights service; increase in financial benefit to customers from the advice given by the Council; review the indicator set for use in CAB contracts from April 2013-2016; increase the uptake in free school meals as a % of the total eligibility figure for Primary and Secondary schools from 72.4%.
- 3.3 The Council will commit at least £3million of the Council's budget each year to spend preventatively to improve the quality of life for young people, older adults and those struggling with deprivation.
£3m was allocated to preventative spend with outcomes agreed by March 2013.
- 3.4 The Council will work with partners to complete the building of new care homes, run by the independent sector, in Tain and Muir-of-Ord. We will complete the refurbishment of existing local authority care homes and retain them in public or community ownership.
Two new homes will be operational by March 2014 and the refurbishment of existing homes will be done March 2017.
- 3.5 The Council will establish nine district partnerships for health and social care.
Nine District partnerships were operational by March 2013
- 3.6 The Council will work so that adults who may be at risk of harm are better supported and protected.
We will implement the Highland Adult Support & Protection Committee Action Plan 2012-15 by March 2015.

- 3.7 The Council will appoint a Carers' Champion, responsible for representing the interests of carers at a council level and with other appropriate public bodies, and engaging with carers across the Highlands.
A Carers' Champion is appointed.
- 3.8 The Council will appoint an Older People & Adults' Champion, responsible for representing the interests of elderly people in receipt of council services. The post-holder will also engage with appropriate bodies representing older people.
An Older People & Adults' Champion is appointed.
- 3.9 Adults with additional needs will receive the support they require to maximise their independence, help promote and retain their dignity, and enable them to contribute to decisions about their care.
We will ensure that people with learning disabilities who require reasonable adjustments have them implemented to allow them to access general health services. We will reduce self-reporting of experiences of discrimination by Care Groups, increase the % of people perceiving themselves to be socially and geographically connected; and 100% of Personal Plans will show evidence of engagement with the individual.
- 3.10 The Council will encourage people to consider and make use of the opportunities provided by self-directed support.
We will increase the number of people receiving a Self-Directed Support package.
- 3.11 Working with the NHS, the Council will support people, particularly older people, to get the most out of technology for personal use, including tele-health and tele-care.
We will increase the number of enhanced tele-care packages. We will maintain visitor numbers at archive centres for on-line and public callers and increase the number of times Access Point terminals are used per 1000 population.
- 3.12 Working with NHS Highland, the Council will ensure that users of care services and their families are actively involved in evaluation, quality assurance and decisions about their services. We will monitor and scrutinise the work of the NHS in this regard, to champion the needs and wishes of patients.
We will ensure 100% of services within Integrated Care Services have up to date service development plans. We will develop a robust quality assurance process for adult care services which focuses on service outcomes and core deliverables using a systematic approach to self-evaluation.
- 3.13L The Council will work with NHS Highland to support the retention of a network of local community hospitals and enhanced local community care services.
We will: increase the number of people, by age group, receiving a care at home service, including intensive support (the number of people, by age group, receiving a care at home service); increase the age of admission of older people to long-term residential and nursing care; reduce the number of A&E admissions due to falls; reduce the number of younger adults, aged 18-64, in institutional care settings; increase the proportion of intermediate placements within residential and nursing care homes; ensure no hospital discharges delayed by 4 or more weeks; reduce the number of bed days lost due to delayed discharges; provide targeted re-ablement services through Integrated District Teams with 40% of people receiving re-ablement interventions not requiring on-going care interventions after initial 6 weeks.

In all our efforts to develop care systems the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

In all our efforts to deliver a care system that works for service-users, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

In developing the care systems the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

4. Working together for the better infrastructure

Ag obair còmhla airson bun-structair nas fheàrr

We will deliver a transport and infrastructure programme for the 21st century. We will work with all governments and agencies to deliver infrastructure projects to support employment and connect our communities.

Our commitments for better infrastructure are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 4.1L Working with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and partners, the Council will strongly support the upgrade of Berriedale Braes, the whole length of the A9 north of Perth, the whole length of the A82 and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.
We will monitor our actions and report on progress.
- 4.2L The Council will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to secure improvements, reduced journey times and fairer pricing on the Highland rail network, to protect and modernise the sleeper service and to develop new commuter rail opportunities around our urban centres.
We worked with partners to re-open the Conon Bridge Railway Station and provided improved parking and cycling facilities there to encourage the modal shift from road to rail. We will monitor our lobbying actions and report on progress.
- 4.3 The Council will improve the roads maintenance allocation system. We will spend preventatively on our roads according to need.
A report will be prepared for the TECS Committee on review of the roads maintenance allocation system (in progress as at March 2013). We will reduce the % of the road network that should be considered for maintenance treatment.
- 4.4 The Council will instigate a co-ordinated, thorough, Highland-wide programme of inspecting watercourses and cleaning gullies & ditches to avoid further water damage and support future repairs, and we will make this programme available to the public.
We will develop highland wide programme on inspecting watercourses and cleaning gullies & ditches (in progress as at March 2013).
- 4.5 The Council will develop options for a long-term solution which provides a secure and effective transport link between Lochcarron and the Lochalsh area in consultation with partners and the local community, and pursue the options for securing external funding.
We identified funding to carry out the Options Appraisal (Stage 1 & 2) in relation to the A890 Strome Ferry Bypass in February 2013 and will complete the Options Appraisal (Stage 1 & 2) in relation to the A890 Strome Ferry Bypass by September 2013.
- 4.6 Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness West-Link road and the associated amenity and leisure improvements.
We will take action to progress this and report on it.
- 4.7L Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness Airport Rail Link.

We will take action to progress this and report on it.

- 4.8 The Council will introduce a plan for sustainable, integrated transport through the Highlands, including consideration of a statutory Quality Bus Partnership and support for schemes, such as the introduction of a 'Cool Rider' for young people. *A plan for sustainable integrated transport through the Highlands will be developed and we will work with transport providers to explore the options for Quality Bus Partnerships and transport travel schemes.*
- 4.9 The Council will engage with the private and third sector to carry out a review of community transport across the Highlands. *We will review community transport across the Highlands by June 2013.*
- 4.10 The Council will work with the Scottish Government and other partners, to improve cycle safety across the Highlands, and expand cycle routes. *We will monitor and report the numbers and trends in relation to the Road Safety Casualty Reduction Targets to 2020 which have been set by the Scottish Government to the Community Safety Public Engagement and Equalities Committee (CSPEE).*
- 4.11 The Council will work with the Scottish Government and other partners to improve motor cycle safety and the safety of young drivers. *We will monitor and report the numbers and trends in relation to motor cycle casualties to the CSPEE Committee.*
- 4.12 Working with partner agencies, the Council will draft a Green Transport Strategy. *We will prepare a Green Transport Strategy for TECS Committee approval by September 2013.*
- 4.13 The Council will continue to reduce carbon emissions from Council operations, with their associated costs, to achieve the Scottish Government's target of 42% reduction in emissions by 2020. We will publish a carbon management plan by 2013. *We will reduce carbon emissions from the Council's operations by 3% in 2012/13. The carbon management plan for 2013-20 was approved in April 2013. It includes a target to reduce emissions by 21% by 2020.*
- 4.14L The Council will work with Highlands & Islands Airports, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and partners to attract new and enhanced air services. We will support the development of Wick and Skye airports, and campaign to protect the Inverness to Gatwick link and reinstate the Inverness to Heathrow link. We will also encourage the development of new international air-links. *We will carry out a joint study with HITRANS an HIE to examine the potential of introducing a scheduled air service from the Island of Skye. We will contribute to marketing a support package for new international routes and report on our other actions and progress with partners to protect, attract new & enhanced air services in the Highlands.*
- 4.15 The Council will increase opportunities for recycling and achieve a 57% rate of recycling household waste by 2017. *We will increase opportunities for recycling and achieve a 57% rate of recycling household waste by 2017.*

- 4.16 The Council will introduce a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to litter, including a review into the Council’s bulky uplift charges, and extend the powers of community wardens to issue fines.
We will: maintain the number of promotional events for litter picking; plan and implement a zero tolerance approach to littering and dog fouling; and maintain the score on the cleanliness index following inspections of a sample of streets and other relevant land. The impact of applying charges for bulky uplifts has been reviewed.
- 4.17 Working with the Scottish Government and partners, the Council will continue to develop flood alleviation schemes across the Highlands.
 L *We will: implement the River Ness (Tidal Section) flood alleviation scheme by March 2015; prepare flood alleviation schemes for implementation as identified in capital programme; and lobby for Government funding for flood alleviation schemes identified in the Council's Capital Programme.*
- 4.18 The Council will ensure the provision of allotments and the maintenance of green spaces and public parks across the Highlands and encourage various schemes such as community growing.
We will: increase by 4 the number of new allotment sites supported by the Council by March 2014; identify a further 4 allotment sites between 2012 and 2014 and review allotment targets in 2014 for the period to 2017 and for these to include community growing. We will maintain the number of parks and green spaces in Highland.
- 4.19 The Council will review its winter maintenance services, to investigate new areas for innovation and improvement.
We will complete the review of winter maintenance policy and service and report to the TECS Committee (in progress as at March 2013).
- 4.20L The Council will work with the Scottish Government to press the UK Government for the same level of protection as previously provided by two emergency towing vehicles covering the Minch and Northern Isles.
We will monitor our action and report on progress.

In all our efforts to build a transport and infrastructure system fit for the 21st century, the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

In promoting new and on-going infrastructure projects in the Highlands, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland’s Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council’s progress in meeting Scotland’s Climate Change Declaration.

In working together for better infrastructure the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

5: Working together for better housing

Ag obair còmhla airson taigheadas nas fheàrr

Our commitments for better housing are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 5.1 The Council will work with the Scottish Government, Housing Associations, and the private sector to help to deliver 5000 new homes by 2017. This will include at least 600 Council houses and other affordable homes.
We will deliver 600 new Council Houses by March 2017 and 120 in 2012/13. We will enable the delivery of 5000 houses enabled by planning policy (2012/13 to 2016/17) and 1000 houses in 2012/13.
- 5.2 The Council will deliver an ambitious Housing Capital Programme, utilising innovative, environmentally sustainable methods to build new council houses and achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for existing housing stock.
We will deliver 600 new Council Houses by March 2017 and 120 in 2012/13. We will achieve all Scottish Housing Quality Standards by March 2015.
- 5.3 The Council will maximise the supply of new affordable housing by continuing to build Council houses and considering other innovative methods of funding new affordable housing to meet housing need.
We will prepare an options paper on alternative funding for new Council Housing for committee.
- 5.4 The Council will adopt innovative approaches, utilising the powers available to the Council, to bring empty properties, both in public and private ownership, back into use for the good of the community. This will include use of the powers offered by the Unoccupied Properties Bill – currently before Parliament – to increase Council Tax on empty properties.
We will develop a strategy for implementing Unoccupied Properties legislation and we will decrease re-let times (days) for managing Council house tenancy changes.
- 5.5 The Council will work with partners to reduce and prevent homelessness in the Highlands.
We will work to reduce homeless presentations and the number of households in temporary accommodation. We will increase the number of homeless prevention team referrals to 1,000 referrals a year and aim for 500 cases of successful prevention outcomes per year.
- 5.6 The Council will work with and empower tenants to become more directly involved in the management of their local environment and council housing estates.
A new Tenant Participation Strategy is being developed in consultation with tenants, setting out the ways in which tenants can become more involved. This will also set out the support that will be available to tenants to help them increase their involvement. We will develop a Tenant Participation Strategy in consultation with tenants by December 2013.
- 5.7 The Council will work with other housing providers to develop a “housing options approach” to ensure that everyone looking for housing in the Highlands gets consistent information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about

housing options that meet their needs.

We will increase the number of homeless prevention team referrals and develop an operating model and implementation plan for Housing Options with Highland Housing Register Partners (by March 2013).

- 5.8 The Council will work with tenants to develop a “Highland Housing Charter” setting out our service standards and how we will involve tenants and other customers in measuring and reporting against these standards

We will work with tenants and other customers to develop a Highland Housing Charter.

- 5.9L The Council will continue to press for the UK Government to write-off the council’s housing debt and seek to work with the Scottish Government and support its efforts to make the case for a debt write-off.

We will actively lobby both Scottish and UK Government to assist with the Housing debt in the Highlands and report on progress made.

In our efforts to have better housing services, the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

In working for better housing, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland’s Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council’s progress in meeting Scotland’s Climate Change Declaration.

In working together for better housing the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

6: Working together for empowering communities

Ag obair còmhla gus comas a thoirt do ar coimhearsnachdan

The Council will empower our communities and continue to decentralise control. We will be innovative and cost-effective in our efforts to enhance democracy in the Highlands. We will work together with people living and working in our various communities, and engage them in the work of their council.

Our commitments for better empowering communities are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 6.1 The Council will introduce local area committees. We will review the local area committee structure after the first year, which will see two pilot committees with substantial powers set up in Inverness and Caithness & Sutherland.
We will complete a review of pilot Area Committees and report to Council in 2013.
- 6.2 The Council will continue to engage with and support the work of the Highland Youth Convener, Highland Youth Voice (HYV) and local members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. We are committed to giving more young people a voice in this council.
There will be evidence that children are involved, engaged and included across service and policy development reported annually. Also there will be evidence that children and young people with additional needs are involved in personal planning. All schools in Highland will continue to have pupil councils. Successful Youth Voice elections will run annually, supported by HYV Executive Meetings and we will ensure a youth worker is active in every Associated School Group.
- 6.3 The Council will work in partnership with organisations in the Highlands to improve our use of video conferencing, teleconferencing and web-casting technology – efficiently and effectively reaching every part of the Highlands.
We will complete a review of video conferencing & web casting by June 2013; review performance indicators for video conferencing; webcasting was extended to existing area committees by December 2012.
- 6.4 The Council will allow public petitions to be considered by the Council and relevant strategic committees.
The scheme for public petitions was approved in March 2013.
- 6.5 The Council will improve public access, including out-of-office-hours access, to the Council and its services, offering members of the public a range of access points including by phone, online and in person.
We will: increase the number of people who are in urgent need who are able to access 24 x7 response co-ordination through the NHS Highland's Out of Hours Hub; increase the number of services to be dealt with through the customer services network and achieve 80% of identified services by March 2017; complete the review of face to face customer contact by April 2013; and increase number of services available on website and achieve 60% from front page of website by March 2017.
- 6.6 The Council will increase the number of issues resolved at first contact.
We will year on year reduce the number of Council complaints and improve response times by increasing % of stage 2 complaint responses completed within timescale. We will achieve a minimum of 85% fulfilment of customer contact dealt

with at first point of contact via customer services network.

- 6.7 The Council will engage meaningfully with the third sector across a range of policy areas and in service provision. We will also agree with partners a joint approach to supporting volunteering and community development in the Highlands.
By August 2013 we will work with partners to agree a joint approach to building community capacity and supporting volunteering. We will increase, by age band, the number of people stating that they volunteer on a regular basis, as reported by the Highland 3rd sector. We will increase the number of community-based health and social care activities in each area of Highland and the number of community-based activities in each area. We will produce a Social Enterprise strategy for the Highlands.
- 6.8 The Council will work with community councils and other community organisations to encourage community empowerment, and will introduce a community challenge fund of £1million of recurring expenditure to support community projects which explore new ways of delivering services at a local level.
The community challenge fund scheme was launched in January 2013. Public and 3rd sector involvement was found in every District Partnership by March 2013.
- 6.9 The Council will work with public and private sector partners to maximise community benefits from new development, and to channel those funds into new community developments, training and jobs. We will encourage communities to make full use of the Highland Council's community benefit system.
We will at least sustain the number and range of community groups actively involved in community based economic development; monitor the amount of money accruing to the three levels of community fund (Levels A, B and C) and monitor the number of developments in Highland that pay community benefit, that pay community benefit through the council policy and the number of communities receiving community benefit from renewables.
- 6.10 The Council will support community, business and infrastructure developments through a successor to the EU 'LEADER' programme and other EU funds.
We will develop and implement a replacement LEADER programme.
- 6.11 With partners the Council will implement the changes to community planning and develop the Single Outcome Agreement in line with the Scottish Government review so that community planning is effective in the Highlands.
A draft Single Outcome Agreement was produced in April 2013, it will be finalised by end June 2013.
- 6.12 The Council will ensure that all new school buildings will act as a community-hub. We will investigate new and innovative ways to deliver more community access to existing buildings as part of a review of the schools estate.
We will ensure that all new school buildings act as a community hub and we will deliver the defined capital programme for the school estate.
- 6.13 The Council will continue to develop an events, festivals and public art strategy for the Highlands.
We will: maintain positive customer feedback on Blas Festival between 60-80%; maintain support for the Feis movement; maintain a Mod presence in the Highlands once every 3 years; develop the existing Arts Strategy to encompass public art by June 2013; work with partners to include Public Art in the Streetscape Works

associated with the River Ness Flood (Tidal Section) Prevention works; and produce supplementary Guidance on the Public Art Strategy for developers by Planning and Development service.

- 6.14 The Council is proud to serve a region of many cultures and will actively promote multi-culturalism.
We aim for 75 % of learners who do not have English as a first language (ESOL) attending classes to achieve accreditation, achievement of specified goals (including completion of courses), or progress to positive destinations. We will ensure that 10% of Adult Literacies Learners move to positive destinations.
- 6.15 Working with Highlife Highland and other partners, the Council will widen access to English language tuition, support Adult Basic Education and deliver progressive and innovative library services.
We will: aim for 75 % of ESOL learners attending classes to achieve accreditation, achievement of specified goals (including completion of courses), or progress to positive destinations; ensure that 10% of Adult Literacies Learners move to positive destinations; achieve the recommended national target for annual number of additions to the adult, children's and teenage learning stock per 1000 population. We will increase library usage (borrowers as a % of the resident populations) and the number of times the terminals are used per 1,000 population (Learning Centre and Learning Access Point Users).
- 6.16 The Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan, including the duties of the Equalities Act 2010, ensuring that staff and services users are treated fairly and with respect.
We will publish all the equalities reports required on time between 2013 and 2017 (outcomes, mainstreaming of equalities report, employment data and the revised equal pay statement and report). We will produce positive annual reports on progress with the Fairer Highland Plan and ensure full compliance with taking the needs of equality groups into account when budget decisions are made. We will increase the percentage of women in management in the Council top 2% and top 5% of earners. We will increase the % of council buildings in which all public areas are suitable for and accessible to people with a disability. The Council website will maintain high levels of accessibility and work towards AAA standards. In 2012/13 the level and type of hate incidents and crimes, domestic violence incidents and crimes and hate incidents in schools will be monitored for performance indicators to be set for future years. We will monitor and report on attitudes to equalities and diversity in our annual survey.
- 6.17 The Council will provide information to the public in clear language, to the 'Crystal Mark' plain English standard.
Develop a plan on implementation of crystal mark plain English standard, report to CSPEE Committee.
- 6.18 The Council will continue to measure its progress openly, report on it publicly and listen to its communities, to ensure we are delivering services that provide best value for Council Taxpayers.
The Council will: meet the Government's annual efficiency targets; have effective financial stewardship confirmed in the audit of the Council's accounts annually; agree its Revenue Budget in February each year and issue annual Council Tax leaflets & Council Tax invoices each year. We will be able to provide positive annual reports on corporate performance including Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs)

and aim to continue to have no areas of significant risk found through the Annual Shared Risk Assessment process by external audit. All Services have used the electronic performance and risk system used since end 2012. We will aim for overall satisfaction with Council services to be reported at 80% or higher and for a positive Best Value audit (due before 2017). We will deliver the Corporate Improvement Programme and realise the benefits, with this reviewed annually.

- 6.19 The Council will improve public engagement, consultation and our handling of complaints.

We will improve the complaints handling process, including increasing satisfaction with complaints handling and ensure the public are consulted on major developments. By March 2013 we had set up public and 3rd sector involvement in every District Partnership by March 2013 and by April 2013 reported on how the Council listened to the 2013 budget consultation responses and the difference it made.

As we look to empower our communities, the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

As we look to empower our communities, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

In empowering our communities the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

7: Working together for strong and safe communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan làidir agus sàbhailte

From our village streets to our town and city centres, we will work to build safer, stronger communities. We will work with the emergency services and the Scottish and UK Governments to ensure that every part of the Highlands can feel safe.

Our commitments for strong and safe communities are set out below along with our description of how we will measure our progress.

- 7.1L Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will support the maintenance of police numbers in the Highlands.
We will lobby to maintain police numbers at 492 (police and cadets including vacant posts as at Sept 2012).
- 7.2 The Council will ensure that elected members will play a full part in agreeing the priorities and local plans for police and fire and rescue services in the Highlands. Elected members will also monitor performance against these plans.
We will agree shared outcomes for community safety by April 2013; agree the local police plan for Highland by March 2014 and the local fire and rescue service plan for Highland by March 2014.
- 7.3 The Council will plan for effective engagement with the new national services for police and fire and rescue and the Scottish Ambulance Service.
By end March 2013, we will learn from the local and national pathfinders to agree the format for engaging with the police, fire and ambulance services for Scotland from April 2013 onwards.
- 7.4 The Council will ensure that low-level, low-risk offenders will make amends to their communities, through a Highland-wide Payback scheme.
We will increase the use of Payback Orders.
- 7.5 The Council will make full use of the Cashback for Communities fund, and will encourage partners to provide incentives for people to channel their energies in a more constructive way.
We will encourage the use of the Cash-back for Communities fund for local initiatives/incentives.
- 7.6L The Council will work with the Scottish Ambulance Service, the NHS and the Scottish Government, to achieve better coverage across the Highlands. We will investigate sustainable solutions to improve patient transport in rural and urban areas.
We will select and implement a local pilot area to examine the options for developing an integrated transport solution in relation to health and social care and community wellbeing. We secured participation of Scottish Ambulance Service in CSPEE committee by March 2013.
- 7.7 The Council will support communities to be more resilient to climate change and extreme adverse weather events, by implementing the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

We will submit the annual report to Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration and provide positive annual reports on progress with the Council's adaptation strategy.

As we look to build safer and stronger communities, the Council will commit to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.

We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

As we seek to build safe and strong communities, the Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

We will report annually to the Scottish Government showing the Council's progress in meeting Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.

In working together for safer and stronger communities the Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We will report annually on the delivery of the Fairer Highland Plan.

8: Council budget

Comhairle Buidseit

The Council sets two revenue budgets. The General Fund covers all Council services other than the costs of providing council housing, which are met from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Council's net budget for General Fund services in 2013-14 is £548m.

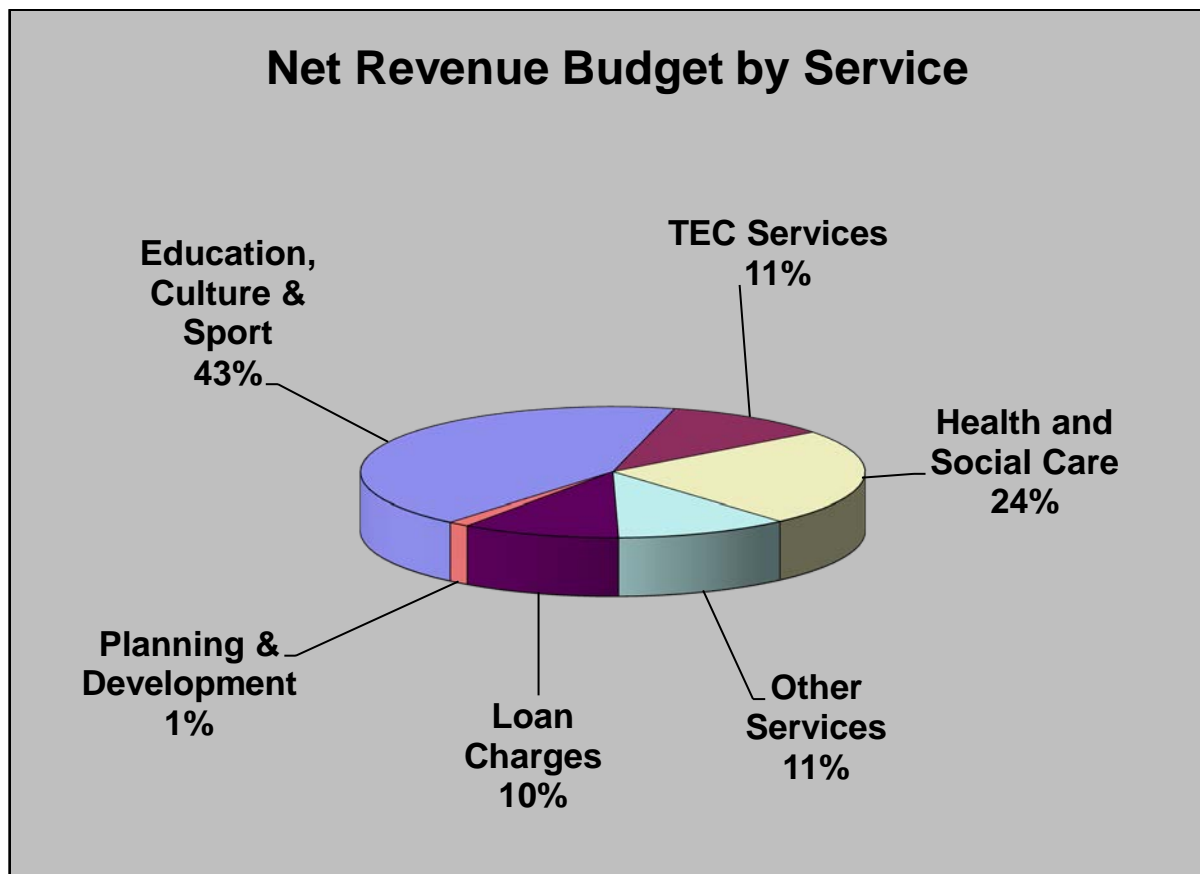
Approximately £311m is spent on employing staff, £101m on property, vehicles and transport, £309m on buying goods and services, including £86m on adult health and social care services commissioned from NHS Highland and £10m on voluntary sector payments, and £55m on loan charges.

This expenditure is offset by council tax income, grants and charges for services. In 2013/14 the sources of funding for the Council's budget are:

	£m	% funding
Scottish Government Funding	435.696	79.4%
Contribution from balances	2.000	0.4%
Total amount needed from Council Tax	110.740	20.2%
Total	548.436	100%

The Band D Council Tax rate for 2013-14 remained frozen at the 2007-08 level, and is £1,163.

The Council spends its budget across the following services:



The General Fund revenue budget no longer includes Police or Fire Services, with these functions transferred to new national Scottish Services with effect from 1 April 2013.

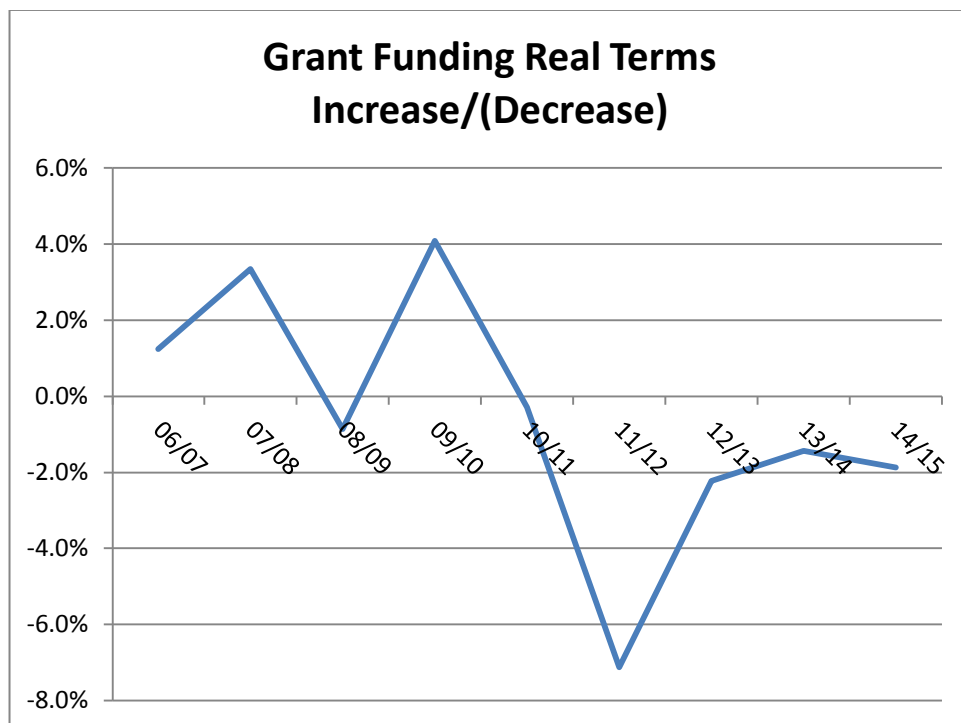
For Council housing, the Housing Revenue Account is funded by Council rents and for 2013-14 is £46.8m. Of this amount £15.4m is provided for repairs and maintenance and £15.6m to meet the repayments of loans to finance capital investment in the housing stock. Discussions with the Scottish and UK Governments are on-going to consider writing off outstanding HRA loan debt to reduce the financial pressure on the HRA of meeting loan charge costs.

The Council's programme includes commitments to set aside £3m per annum as preventative funding for children older people and people suffering from deprivation. In addition, an additional £250,000 per annum is identified to support people with welfare reform advice and assistance.

Budget savings and forecasts

As a result of the worldwide economic crisis, there have been significant reductions in UK public sector spending to tackle the level of national debt. Over the 3 year period 2012/13 to 2014/15 the Council is facing a 'flat' grant settlement, but the Council's costs increase from inflationary increases in the costs, goods and services necessary to provide services to the public. This creates a gap in funding.

The graph below shows the real terms reduction in grant funding over the period 2010/11 onwards.



To bridge this gap, savings have had to be found on the following scale:

	£m
2008/09	12.753
2009/10	12.901
2010/11	12.053
2011/12	22.766
2012/13	18.613
2013/14	11.612
2014/15	12.157

The most recent public consultation (2012) on the budget generated over 10,000 separate points on budget questions asked. These came from the Citizens' Panel, online questionnaires, other written responses, responses from pupils through schools, through public meetings at Ward Forums, in focus groups, through the Council's budget blog and through meetings with specific groups including Trades Unions and Highland Youth Voice.

Some of the key messages fed back showed strong support for community involvement in service provision, reviewing Council staffing costs and improving Council efficiency including energy efficiency. Other feedback showed where the public felt funding was important, such as for road maintenance, and that some budget savings ideas were not supported, including shortening the school day. Full feedback on the consultation and the difference it made to the budget decisions is published.

Balances

The Council holds reserves and balances to provide a contingency to meet unforeseen events not covered within the budget. Examples of the use of balances in previous years includes meeting additional costs relating to severe winter weather and flooding events. Balances have also been used to provide for demand led service pressures, particularly in areas such as care for the elderly, and children's placements.

The level of non- earmarked balances in 2013 is around £16.5m, equivalent to 3% of the Council's revenue budget.

Capital investment

The Council also plans to spend approximately £107m in 2013-14 (£73.9m General Fund and £33.1m HRA) on capital investment in schools, roads, bridges, the natural environment, flood

prevention, waste management, cultural and leisure facilities, office accommodation rationalisation, housing and health & social care. This investment is used to build new facilities and roads infrastructure as well as to improve existing facilities. In addition to this capital investment, the Council also funds education investment through public private partnerships.

During 2013 the current 3 year programme will be reviewed to cover indicative 5 and 10 year programmes. In addition the Council will explore new models for funding Council house building.