

## **Item 9 - Question Time**

To the Chair of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee

“Could you inform me what action you have taken to resolve the failure of the Scottish Government to announce confirmation of funding for a new Academy for the town of Alness since the last Committee meeting on 11 November 2015?”

### Response to Mr J Stone

In response to a letter from myself, information from the Minister for Infrastructure Keith Brown regarding Alness Academy was, as you may be aware, presented to members of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee at the November meeting. Since then, I have not personally contacted the Minister again. However, I have written to the local MSP Rob Gibson, encouraging him to lend support for a speedy resolution to the situation and am awaiting a reply.

The Council has made clear its concerns about the delayed announcement of funding for Alness Academy, with both the Scottish Government and the Scottish Futures Trust.

However, the rules under which these projects are classified for funding purposes are set in Europe. Because of changes to European directives, the private sector financing classification of projects was impacted, which had implications for the Scottish Government programme.

Accordingly, the Scottish Government has been required to make changes to support the Scottish Futures Trust Programme. These changes are being progressed. Local authorities have also been required to make some changes, and these were agreed by Highland Council at the November Resources Committee.

These various processes are enabling the Scottish Futures Trust to progress its programme. Twelve projects that were first indicated between 2010 and 2012, were recently given the go ahead. This provides reassurance that the technical issues impacting on the funding announcement regarding Alness Academy are being resolved.

In the meantime, Officers are continuing to progress the short-term maintenance and investment necessary to address the immediate issues at the school, and are in regular contact with the Scottish Government and civil servants.