

## Item 9 - Question Time

To the Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee

“Given the Administration’s cuts to both the revenue and capital Play Parks budget, how will you replace broken, worn or damaged equipment in the Highland Council playparks?”

### Response to Ms M Smith

At the Council’s revenue budget setting meeting on 15 February 2018, the Council agreed the following approach to maintaining its play areas:

Rationalise the number of Play Areas that the Council maintains, subject to further discussion at Ward Business Meetings, by removing or passing to community ownership those play areas that have low play value; are redundant; where further maintenance can no longer be justified in terms of cost; and/or there is adequate provision nearby. Resources will be concentrated on providing quality play facilities at the remaining sites. The budget for repairs will be reduced correspondingly, and a prioritised repairs programme will be introduced for the remaining Play Areas.

In summer 2017, an external consultant was engaged to carry out independent inspections on the condition of all 435 of our play areas. A programme of removal of obsolete equipment based on this report has been developed and implementation started during the last Financial Year. A new repair and maintenance programme is being developed based on the findings of these inspections, and this will be implemented during 2018.

To complement this work, a more strategic approach to providing outdoor play facilities within the Highlands is being developed. We will work with partners to explore what opportunities there might be to support the securing and enhancing of play spaces for all ages by working with our communities. It is anticipated that the recommendations in any proposed strategy will include:

- Rationalisation of current play area provision to address facilities that have low play value, where further maintenance can no longer be justified in terms of cost, and / or there is adequate provision nearby; and
- An increased role for communities in future provision and maintenance of play facilities