

Item 12 - Question Time

To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee

“On 16 May, the Stagecoach school bus services to Nairn Academy, Dingwall Academy and Culloden Academy were all at least 20 minutes late. Stagecoach reported that these delays were due to "vehicle unavailability in the depot".

On 17 May, the Stagecoach school bus from Beauly to Charleston was 20 minutes late. On 22 May, the Beauly to Charleston bus was delayed by 20 minutes again. On 23 May, the Beauly to Charleston bus was delayed by 30 minutes.

There were crucial Higher and National 5 exams on these dates and the delays were highly disruptive and distressing to pupils.

What efforts are being made to enforce the terms of the Highland Council's School bus service contract with Stagecoach and ensure that our young people get to school on time and how is information about delays and timetable changes communicated to parents?”

Response to Ms E Knox

The Council has applied penalties for routes serving Nairn, Culloden and Charleston. Issues on Dingwall routes have not resulted in pupils signing in late. The public transport team has been obtaining a weekly monitoring report on performance of all Stagecoach's school transport contracts and have received an improvement plan from the company. The Council has made it very clear that a Charleston contract has come very close to termination, and this could also happen elsewhere if there are further failings.

Stagecoach inform schools via telephone of any delays in order that the school can then inform parents via their own communication methods. They also have a Facebook page: School Bus Information – Highlands. This is a closed group that parents can join to keep track of any disruptions via social media. Stagecoach also have an app where their vehicles can be monitored in real time.