

(42) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

Following years of underinvestment by the Highland Council in their annual roads budget, due to a combination of austerity and local authority cutbacks.

This financial year the full Highland Council voted to secure millions in additional funding required to carry out the growing list of essential road repairs and resurfacing projects required to repair the miles of old worn and crumbling roads.

I understand that across Highland there is a shortage of staff to cover all the posts (including HGV drivers) needed in the Roads and Transport Department, and this will result in an unwanted situation, where the Council for once has all the money to spend, however it doesn't have all the necessary staff in place to get all the road repair work done.

How many vacant staff positions are there currently in the Roads & Transport Department across all ward areas? and can you please give an assurance that Highland Council will have the requisite number of staff in place to cover essential winter maintenance duties throughout this winter?

*From a workforce of some 200, there are currently 14 vacancies, but it is recognised this is a dynamic situation. Recruitment to positions is ongoing, as is contingency measures such as cross service working, agency workers and local contractors. A full review of the resources needed to deliver the Winter Policy is currently underway – and work on consistency of approach to ensure compliance with legislation in terms of working and driving hours will inform both the resources needed across Highland – which will allow further refinement of the winter delivery both this year and for future years.*