

**Highland Council: 9 May 2024: Questions****Member Questions****1. Mr A Christie**

To the Leader

Please could the leader detail the key decisions taken at COSLA Leaders Meetings from 1<sup>st</sup> January to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and how he, or the Council representative if not him, voted on the item under consideration in the event there was a vote?

The documents and items relating to COSLA Leader's meetings where matters have been agreed to be in the public domain are available on the COSLA website here:

[https://www.cosla.gov.uk/documents/public-documents?queries\\_input\\_query=&queries\\_topic\\_query\\_posted=1&queries\\_topic\\_query=0&queries\\_category\\_query\\_posted=1&queries\\_category\\_query=Leaders+Meeting&search\\_page\\_15893\\_sort\\_direction=1](https://www.cosla.gov.uk/documents/public-documents?queries_input_query=&queries_topic_query_posted=1&queries_topic_query=0&queries_category_query_posted=1&queries_category_query=Leaders+Meeting&search_page_15893_sort_direction=1)

It would not be appropriate for me to detail the decisions taken by COSLA where matters on the agenda have been held in private.

**2. Mr A Christie**

To the Leader

Please could the leader detail the individual posts that are currently vacant within the Health and Social Care Department and the length of time they have been vacant?

Detailed below are the vacancies in the Health and Social Care directorate (broken down into Justice, MHO, ESW, Health and Children's Services). It is not possible with the current systems to provide information on the length of time that these of posts have been vacant without undertaking a manual check, which would involve a significant use of staff time.

**Family Teams and Health**

| Teams                    | Post Desc                           | FTE  | Grade |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|------|-------|
| FT - Caithness           | Practice Lead                       | 1.00 | HC10  |
| FT - Caithness           | Social Worker                       | 2.00 | HC9   |
| FT - Caithness           | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools) | 0.50 | HC5   |
| FT - Caithness           | School Nurse                        | 0.13 | 6     |
| FT - Caithness           | Health Visitor                      | 0.20 | 7     |
| FT - East Ross           | Practice Lead                       | 1.00 | HC10  |
| FT - East Ross           | Social Worker (35)                  | 1.80 | HC9   |
| FT - East Ross           | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools) | 1.00 | HC5   |
| FT - Health & Disability | Social Worker                       | 0.08 | HC9   |
| FT - Health & Disability | Family Key Worker                   | 1.00 | HC8   |
| FT - Health & Disability | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools) | 0.50 | HC5   |
| FT - Inv Central, B&S    | Social Worker (35)                  | 4.00 | HC9   |
| FT - Inv Central, B&S    | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools) | 0.87 | HC5   |

|                               |                                      |      |      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------|------|
| FT - Inv Central, B&S         | Health Visitor                       | 0.64 | 7    |
| FT - Inv Central, B&S         | School Nurse                         | 1.96 | 6    |
| FT - Inv Central, B&S         | CEY Practitioner                     | 0.59 | HC6  |
| FT - Inv East & Nairnshire    | Social Worker                        | 2.68 | HC9  |
| FT - Inv East & Nairnshire    | CEY Practitioner                     | 1.00 | HC6  |
| FT - Inv West                 | Social Worker                        | 2.37 | HC9  |
| FT - Inv West                 | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools)  | 0.45 | HC5  |
| FT - Inv West                 | Health Visitor                       | 1.66 | 7    |
| FT - Inv West                 | School Nurse                         | 1.55 | 6    |
| FT - Lochaber                 | Practice Lead                        | 2.00 | HC10 |
| FT - Lochaber                 | Social Worker                        | 5.79 | HC9  |
| FT - Lochaber                 | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools)  | 2.63 | HC5  |
| FT - Lochaber                 | CEY Practitioner                     | 0.80 | HC6  |
| FT - Lochaber                 | Support Worker - Disability          | 0.95 | HC3  |
| FT - Lochaber                 | Community Children's Worker          | 1.00 | HC6  |
| FT - Mid Ross                 | Social Worker                        | 1.75 | HC9  |
| FT - Mid Ross                 | Staff Nurse                          | 0.80 | 5    |
| FT - Mid Ross                 | Childrens Servcies Worker (Schools)  | 0.60 | HC5  |
| FT - Skye & West Ross         | Social Worker                        | 1.00 | HC9  |
| FT - Skye & West Ross         | Health Visitor                       | 0.20 | 7    |
| FT - Skye & West Ross         | Community Children's Worker          | 1.00 | HC6  |
| FT - Sutherland               | Autism Practitioner                  | 1.00 | HC9  |
| FT - Sutherland               | Social Worker                        | 1.46 | HC9  |
| FT - Sutherland               | School Nurse                         | 1.00 | 6    |
| FT - Sutherland               | Health Visitor                       | 2.00 | 7    |
| INBS C&F Support Workers      | Support Worker C&P                   | 1.04 | HC3  |
| Nursing Management Team       | Associate Lead Nurse                 | 0.20 | 8A   |
| Nursing Management Team       | Team Lead (Health)                   | 0.04 | 7    |
| CPA Highland Wide             | Child Protection Adviser             | 1.00 | 7    |
| LAC Nurse                     | Clinical Nurse Specialist            | 1.00 | 6    |
| LAC Nurse                     | School Nursing Services 6            | 1.00 | 6    |
| LAC Nurse                     | School Nurse Trainee Band 5          | 3.00 | 6    |
| Family Nurse Partnership      | FNP Supervisor Band 8A               | 0.60 | 8A   |
| Family Nurse Partnership      | FNP Nurse                            | 1.00 | 7    |
| Cradle to Grave Nurses        | Staff Nurse                          | 0.20 | 7    |
| AHP - Dietetics               | Dietetics Services Band 6            | 0.10 | 6    |
| AHP - Occupational Therapists | Occupational Therapist (Children)    | 0.25 | HC9  |
| AHP - Occupational Therapists | AHP Support Practitioner             | 0.47 | 4    |
| AHP - Physiotherapists        | Physiotherapy Services Band 6        | 1.00 | 6    |
| AHP - Physiotherapists        | Physiotherapy Services 5             | 1.00 | 5    |
| Speech Language Therapy       | AHP Support Practitioner             | 0.10 | 4    |
| PMHW Highland                 | Primary Mental Health Worker Trainee | 0.05 | 6    |
| QARO team                     | Quality & Reviewing Officer          | 1.00 | HC9  |
| Staffing -Training Section    | Social Worker (35)                   | 0.40 | HC9  |
| Youth Action Services         | Forensic Psychologist in Training    | 1.00 | HC9  |
| Youth Action Services North   | Social Worker (35)                   | 3.00 | HC9  |
| Youth Action Services North   | Youth Justice Practitioner           | 2.00 | HC5  |
| Youth Action Services South   | Social Worker (35)                   | 1.00 | HC9  |
| Principal Officer Social Work | Principal Officer (Social Care)      | 1.00 | HC12 |
| Family Centre Merkinch        | Community Early Years Practitioner   | 0.54 | HC6  |

|                       |                            |      |     |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|------|-----|
| H&SC Business Support | Office Services Band 3     | 0.07 | 3   |
| H&SC Business Support | Administrative Assistant 2 | 0.80 | HC5 |
| H&SC Business Support | Administrative Assistant 2 | 0.10 | HC5 |
| H&SC Business Support | Administrative Assistant 1 | 0.80 | HC4 |
| H&SC Business Support | Clerical Assistant 2       | 0.50 | HC3 |

### Looked After Children

| Code Desc                          | Post Desc                                | FTE  | Grade |
|------------------------------------|--|------|-------|
| F & A Team - HQ                    | Social Worker (35)                       | 0.50 | HC9   |
| Staffin Children Respite Centre    | Social Care Worker                       | 0.57 | HC6   |
| The Orchard Child Special Need     | Depute Unit Manager                      | 0.14 | HC8   |
| The Orchard Child Special Need     | Social Care Worker                       | 0.72 | HC6   |
| The Orchard Child Special Need     | Learning Disabilities Nursing Serv Band5 | 0.76 | 5     |
| Child Residential 122 Ashton Rd    | Social Care Worker                       | 1.50 | HC6   |
| Linked House Broom Drive, Inv      | Social Care Worker 2                     | 1.85 | HC6   |
| Linked House Killen Old School, BI | Social Care Worker 2                     | 0.50 | HC6   |
| Arach NWD Hub                      | Depute Unit Manager                      | 1.00 | HC8   |
| Arach NWD Hub                      | Social Worker (35)                       | 6.62 | HC9   |
| Culbokie Residential Unit          | Clerical Assistant 2                     | 1.50 | HC3   |

### Criminal Justice and Mental Health

| Teams                          | Post Desc                    | FTE  | Grade |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|------|-------|
| <b>Justice Services</b>        |                              |      |       |
| CJS SBS                        | Clerical Assistant 2         | 2.50 | HC3   |
| MFMC                           | Social Worker (35)           | 1.00 | HC9   |
| Drug & Alcohol Action Team     | Social Worker                | 1.00 | HC9   |
| North CJS                      | Social Worker (35)           | 1.00 | HC9   |
| UWO - Inverness                | team manager                 | 0.85 | HC10  |
| UWO - Inverness                | Community Payback Supervisor | 1.00 | HC5   |
| UWO - West                     | Community Payback Supervisor | 0.40 | HC5   |
| MAPPA                          | Clerical Assistant 2         | 0.50 | HC3   |
| CommSent Persistent Offenders  | Social Worker (35)           | 1.00 | HC9   |
| Caledonian System Women        | Criminal Justice Officer     | 0.50 | HC5   |
| Porterfield Prison Social Work | Social Work Team Manager     | 0.15 | HC10  |
| Porterfield Prison Social Work | Social Worker (35)           | 1.00 | HC9   |
| Sec. 27 Justice SW Recovery    | Criminal Justice Officer     | 1.00 | HC5   |
| HADP Non-Fatal OD IRP          | Social Worker                | 1.00 | HC9   |
| <b>MHO</b>                     |                              |      |       |
| Mental Health Officer - HQ     | Mental Health Officer        | 0.80 | HC9   |

### **3. Mr M Reiss**

To the Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing

Overnight Respite Services have been removed from Thor House Thurso without the consent of local Members. This facility was purpose built to provide respite care. When will the former excellent service be reinstated?

Unfortunately, officers are not able to give an exact date as to when the short break provision will be reinstated because of the complex planning involved with a range of partners, including key partners in housing and property. Extensive work has been undertaken e.g. community engagement, third sector engagement, in tandem with needs, data and trend analysis, to establish patterns of use and demand. We are now at the later stages of options appraisal and financial modelling to ensure that the short break provision meets the level of local need, and is financially viable, ensuring best value to the council and the community. Timescales will be significantly determined based on a second property being funded, secured, and developed - either for short-break provision or as an alternative house for our children and young people in which Thor House is their home. Officers are working at pace noting the reinstatement of a short break provision is a high priority for the service, and the community.

### **4. Mrs I MacKenzie**

To the Leader

Several residents, mainly from our older population, who use private car parks in Inverness, have raised various issues. This included "poor signage, unreasonable terms, exorbitant fines, aggressive demands for payment and an opaque appeals process".

At the moment there's no specific legislation dealing with parking on private land in Scotland.

The Scottish Government should look at creating a code of conduct which would reassure drivers that private car park operators would treat them in a "fair and proportionate" manner. The RAC and the AA have said the code would increase standards for private parking operators and improve drivers' experiences of private parking. The International Parking Community also said the implementation of the code would help the sector to "address the doubt and scepticism that has plagued the industry's public perception for far too long".

Can Highland Council raise the matter with the Scottish Government to seek action to establish a regulatory framework for the industry?

I would advise that the UK Government is currently reviewing the Private Car Parks Code of Practice and would hope that any outcomes from this review will be considered by Scottish Government for incorporation in Scotland.

Meanwhile, The Parking (Code of Practice) Act 2019 was passed by the UK Parliament in March 2019 and is currently in force.

<https://www.advicescotland.com/parking-charge-notice-private-firms/>

## 5. Mr C Ballance

To the Leader

Given the Government's commitment to consult this summer on introducing a Carbon Emissions Land Tax, could the Leader give the date for the seminar on this proposal which was promised a full year ago in May 2023?

A seminar will be arranged once the Government's consultation has been launched.

## 6. Mrs H Crawford

To the Chair of Education

In line with the Attendance Management Guidance, can you please provide an analysis of staff absences from the past year, including the rate of absence (days lost), the cost of these absences, a breakdown of the absences into categories of long-term and short-term, the most prevalent reason for absence, any link to health and safety breaches, and the percentage of return-to-work interviews that have been successfully conducted?

Absence Information is detailed below.

| Q3 2023/24 (Oct to Dec) <b>SHORT TERM</b> less than 28 days |                      |                    |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Service   | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                       | 3896.03              | 978                |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                           | 4223.62              | 876                |

| Q3 2023/24 (Oct to Dec) <b>LONG TERM</b> 28 days or more |                      |                    |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Service  | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                    | 3780.69              | 91                 |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                        | 2416.49              | 64                 |

| Q2 2023/24 (July to Sept) <b>SHORT TERM</b> less than 28 days |                      |                    |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Service   | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                         | 1376.53              | 552                |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                             | 1306.82              | 446                |

| Q2 2023/24 (July to Sept) <b>LONG TERM</b> 28 days or more |                      |                    |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Service  | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                      | 2372.95              | 78                 |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                          | 1159.62              | 32                 |

|   |                      |                    |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| Q1 2023/24 (Apr to Jun) <b>SHORT TERM</b> less than 28 days |                      |                    |
| Service   | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                       | 1925.08              | 729                |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                           | 2327.86              | 578                |

|  |                      |                    |
|--|----------------------|--------------------|
| Q1 2023/24 (Apr to Jun) <b>LONG TERM</b> 28 days or more |                      |                    |
| Service  | Sum of FTE days lost | Count of Employees |
| Education and Learning - Non-Teaching                    | 2470.54              | 96                 |
| Education and Learning - Teaching                        | 2375.43              | 63                 |

It is not possible to provide information on the cost of covering absences because supply cover is not provided for every occasion of staff sickness. It would be a decision for the Head Teacher if they wished use supply cover or reallocate staffing resource within their school. Likewise, supply cover can be used to release staff to attend training or events. So not all supply cover costs are sickness related.

There have been no reports of staff absences linked to health and safety breaches.

It has not been possible to provide a breakdown of the reasons for sickness absence for the Service Quarter by Quarter in the time available.

Return-to-work interviews are conducted and recorded by Head Teachers at school level. Attendance Management Training is available via e-learning to all managers has now been updated, this will enable them to provide employees with appropriate support.

## 7. Mr S Mackie

To the Leader

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, SNP spokesperson and Member of Parliament for West Dunbartonshire, Martin Docherty-Hughes stated that funds allocated for decommissioning by The Department for Energy and Net Zero (DESNEZ) should not be put towards the clean-up of Scotland's nuclear sites, labelling them "unnecessary nuclear projects".

Martin Docherty-Hughes MP attests that funding for sites such as Dounreay, Hunterston or Chapelcross should instead be redirected to fund public services such as "Hospitals, Doctors, Nurses, Teachers and Police Officers", with zero detail on his party's plans for the nuclear communities that host legacy sites.

Given the importance of the Civil nuclear industry to Caithness and North Sutherland, does the Leader of the Highland Council recognise:

- The c.£220 million annual spend allocated to decommissioning in Highland (funded wholly through the NDA, a subsidiary of the Department of Energy and Net Zero?
- The 1,232 locals employed by Nuclear Restoration Services in Caithness and North Sutherland?

- The 700 jobs directly supported in the nuclear decommissioning supply chain?
- The £487,000 of direct socio-economic support from the Dounreay site (that funds initiatives like Focus North, STEM activities for young people and the PSO Officer for the Wick to Aberdeen airlink)?
- And the £8.4 million of NDA of grant support that has seen investments into key projects like Caithness ports, the Sutherland Spaceport and Nucleus?

If these facts are recognised, will The Leader of the Highland Council formally correct the SNP's spokesperson in Westminster? And will he outline that the decommissioning industry is integral to the tax-take of not only this local authority but in providing funds that sustain public services across this region?

The decommissioning industry is critical to the economy of the Caithness and North Sutherland area. It will remain an important part of the economy for many years to come, particularly given some of the demographic challenges being experienced by the area.

## **8. Mr A Graham**

To the Leader

Charleston Academy: please provide details of the extent of areas within the school for which renewal or precautionary works e.g. support beams, repairs, replacement ceilings etc have been required due to the presence of RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete)?

The roofs over the majority of areas at Charleston Academy & Community Complex are made with RAAC planks with the only exceptions being the roofs over the Assembly Hall in the school, and the games halls and extension in the Community Complex.

Mitigation works are being undertaken on a risk-based approach following the recommendations of the Structural engineers and will likely be ongoing for the remaining life of the asset. So far mitigation measures have been fitted to 60% of the RAAC roofed areas.

## **9. Mr R Stewart**

To the Leader

In light of the independent assessment concluding that the Academy Street Regeneration Project provides 'poor' value for money and will deliver a negative return on investment will this administration now agree to scrap this scheme?

The City of Inverness Area committee has already made a decision on this matter and as the Council Leader, I respect that decision.

## **10. Mr D Macpherson**

To the Leader

In 2009, 6.5% of learners had an additional support need.  
In 2024, it is 37% - yet teacher numbers are falling!

Between 2010 and 2022, the number of ASN teachers in Scotland fell by 19%  
- when the number of pupils with ASN increased by almost 24%.

Do you agree with the Educational Institute of Scotland and the need for more, not fewer teachers and more qualified specialist teachers to help our children with Additional Support Needs ?

The numbers of teachers in schools are linked to the pupil roll. There is no mandatory requirement for Additional Support Needs teachers to hold any qualifications in additional support or inclusive practice. The expectation of The General Teaching Council for Scotland standard for full registration of teachers is that qualified teachers have sufficient depth of knowledge and understanding to adapt planning approaches of that the needs of every learner are effectively addressed.

## **11. Mr R Mackintosh**

To the Chair of Communities & Place

Fly-tipping is a blight on our Highland landscape and affects both rural and urban areas. How many reports of fly-tipping is made annually to the Highland Council?

The total number of reported fly-tipping incidents in Highland during 2022/23 was 1175, updated numbers for 2023/24 will be confirmed shortly.