

Motions: 12 December 2024

1. Council notes the 46 privately run care homes across the Highlands will not get any reimbursement for costs related to recent National Insurance changes.

Council notes 85% of our care homes already operate at a financial disadvantage due to the National Care Home Contract, which assumes 50 beds operating at 100% capacity.

Council notes the loss of 218 care home beds since 2022, and the distress each of these closures has caused to residents, their families, and local communities.

Council requests the council leader, and the Chair of Health and Social Care Committee, writes to the UK Government

- 1) to request an exemption from recent National Insurance changes for Highland care home providers to avoid additional financial pressures on our already vulnerable care homes,
- 2) to invite the Secretary of State for Scotland to meet Council Group Leaders first hand to discuss the specific circumstances affecting Highland care homes to help develop policy solutions to secure their future

Signed: Mr D Gregg Mr J Grafton Mrs T Robertson Mrs J McEwan
 Mr M Baird Mr A Baxter Ms M MacCallum Mr A Graham
 Mr R Gunn Mr R Gale

Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. There will be the requirement of Member/Officer time involved in the preparation of proposed letter and arrangements for the proposed meeting. It is assumed can be managed within existing time/resources.

This financial implication assessment is limited to the direct implications and actions within the motion as worded. Any subsequent implications could only be assessed were there to be any subsequent change, and assessment of implications at that time.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

The motion seeks a letter to be written to the UK Government and discussions to take place, in relation to the impact national insurance changes will have on care homes. As a result, there are no anticipated direct impacts as a result of the motion.

2. Break up the Highland Council

This Council acknowledges and welcomes the repeated acknowledgement and statements from multiple senior elected members of the Scottish Government, that the Highland Council area is geographically too large. The increasingly frequent statements in support of reviewing the governance arrangements of the Highland Council area, with some going as far as openly supporting breaking up the area into smaller Councils, are welcome support for the unique issue we face.

No amount of good intentions and efforts from this chamber and Council can realistically deliver the best for such a diverse population. The issues we face are structural in nature and were forced upon this area nearly 30 years ago in nothing more than an experiment, with no regard for the needs of the people and communities across the Highlands.

Under current arrangements, we can only do the best within a very flawed system.

Therefore, this Council agrees to take up offer made by several members of the Scottish Government and Parliament to seek a review into what a new local authority and/or governance arrangements would better serve the vast and wide range of needs of our Highland communities. The first steps being the Council Leader formally writing to the Scottish Government to express the agreement made and for Council to make initial steps to capture Member views in more detail with the establishment a workshop and working group for the delivery of local democracy

Signed: Mr A Jarvie Mr A Baxter Mr M Reiss Mr R Stewart
 Mr L Fraser Mr D Macpherson Mr A Christie Mr S Mackie
 Mrs B Jarvie

Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. There will be the requirement of Member/Officer time involved in the preparation of the proposed letter to Scottish Government and preparation for/attendance at the proposed workshop and subsequent analysis. This may be significant. It is assumed this can be managed within existing time/resources, but potentially with implications for other work priorities.

This financial implication assessment is limited to the direct implications and actions within the motion as worded. Any subsequent implications could only be assessed were there to be any subsequent change, and assessment of implications at that time.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

The motion seeks that the Council writes to the Scottish Government seeking support and sets up a working group for the delivery of local democracy. At this stage, there are no anticipated direct impacts as a result of the motion however any review or work undertaken to review local democracy should consider assessment of impacts as part of that process.

3. As we continue to look at public transport options to address Climate Change it is time we considered trains.

Promises made over the years have not been fulfilled.

The Far North Line takes up to 40 minutes longer than it did in 2000. If running late this service can be held for 40 minutes at Muir of Ord.

Highland Main services to Edinburgh and Glasgow no longer arrive to suit the working day- a service that was introduced in 2000 to aid business. Transferring waste services to rail will affect capacity on the line.

Inverness to Aberdeen improvements to reduce travel time to 2 hours have not been completed.

The Highlands must have fit for purpose railway connections if we are to reduce the number of vehicles on our roads. Rail services that enable our business community to be connected to wider markets.

As a council we must become more vocal to ensure we have connections suitable for the economic changes we anticipate as the Green Freeport and all associated business comes to Highland.

I seek support for a discussion session with all interested parties to ensure we bring these issues to the fore.

Signed: Mrs T Robertson Mr A Graham Mrs J McEwan Mr J Grafton
 Mr D Gregg Mr M Baird Mrs A MacLean Mr J Edmondson
 Ms M MacCallum Mr R Gunn

Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. There will be the requirement of Member/Officer time involved in arranging and progressing proposed discussions, which it is assumed can be managed within existing time/resources.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

The motion seeks a discussion session to explore issues surrounding rail services in the north. As a result, there are not anticipated to be any direct impacts as a result of the motion.

4. The Council notes that Education officials have been tasked with producing a review for the next Education Committee, in light of the 2024 SQA results. Whilst recognising that officials and school staff are working at a challenging time, this Council asks for thorough and clear reporting on the implications of the following:

- The removal of Principal Teacher posts from many Primary schools
- A substandard school estate
- Inadequate provision for children with Special Educational and Support Needs
- Disappointing Senior phase attainment, including deteriorating standards in 10 out of 15 key standards
- Prevailing Job insecurity for teachers and assistants
- Inadequate support for Newly Qualified Teachers
- Persistence with a 'No School Exclusions' policy in the face of disruptive pupil behaviour
- Continuing poor attendance levels
- Inadequate curricular and syllabus support
- Inadequate transition data across ASGs
- Failure to recruit and retain school staff at all levels and in all localities

Signed: Dr M Gregson Mrs H Crawford Mrs B Jarvie

Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. There will be the requirement of Officer time involved in the preparation of proposed reports. This may be significant given the number of topics listed. It is assumed this can be managed within existing time/resources, but potentially with implications for other work priorities.

Integrated Impact Assessment: To follow

The motion seeks that the review to be undertaken as a result of SQA results considers the implications of specific factors. As a result, there are no anticipated direct impacts as a result of the motion.

THE FOLLOWING MOTIONS WILL BE TABLED BUT NOT DEBATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 12.2

5. Women's Aid

Highland Council notes:

- 1) The valuable work done by the Women's Aid groups across the Highlands in helping to keep our communities safe
- 2) That more than 2300 reports of domestic abuse were recorded by Police Scotland in 2022-2023
- 3) That although the vast majority of domestic abuse cases affect women and children men can also be subjected to domestic abuse
- 4) The physical and emotional needs of men and women and children while coping and recovering from domestic abuse are not the same

The Highland Council are urged to continue its financial support for all of the Women's Aid groups in the Highlands.

The Highland Council is urged to rethink the proposed commissioning strategy that would result in a 'gender neutral' service run by a single contractor across the Highlands. This strategy would lead to a centralised service unresponsive to the needs of domestic abuse survivors across the Highland area.

This would lead to closure of Women's Aid groups across the Highlands and reduce the level of safety for the survivors of domestic abuse.

Signed: Mr A MacKintosh Dr M Gregson Mr R Stewart Mrs B Jarvie
 Mrs I MacKenzie Mrs J McEwan

6. I urge that this chamber supports an immediate increase in ASN support to relieve some of the multiple stresses across our schools. Whilst we request the newly appointed Chief Officer of Education to fully engage and address the many inherited issues with empathy and a common sense supportive approach.

Signed: Mrs B Jarvie Dr M Gregson Mrs H Crawford Mr R Stewart
 Mr A Jarvie Mrs I MacKenzie