

1. What we will do for Children and Families

- 1.1 **We will work with the Scottish Government to develop an ambitious 10 year capital programme to provide modern schools for Highland's children and we will ensure the completion, on time, of the current 5 year programme of three new and five refurbished schools.** M
- There has been some slippage in the new schools programme but this is expected to come back on target. Lochaber High School Phase 1 has started and Thurso High School refurbishment completed. Work at Grantown Grammar and Nairn Academy is programmed for summer/autumn 2009.
- 1.2 **We will achieve full implementation of the Scottish Government's policy of "Getting it Right for Every Child" which will ensure that all children get the help they need when they need it, by 2009** ✓
- Getting it right for every child* has been rolled out across all of Highland, and full operational responsibility has been devolved to local Service Managers to sustain and consolidate implementation. Sharing information electronically continues to be challenging with progress being made. Care First now with the capability to connect to eCare and work on-going to enable linkages to schools systems. There is early evidence of improvement in all 4 key indicators including reducing referrals to the Reporter (2199 in 2006/7 to 1915 in 2007/8, data awaited for 2008/9) and the number of social work reports to SCRA (799 in 2006/7 to 743 in 2008/9).
- 1.3 **We will be better corporate parents of Highland's "looked after" children and, by working with our partners, we will help them to reach their full potential as they move into adulthood, by improving their educational outcomes, reducing reliance on out of authority placements and supporting them as they move into appropriate accommodation and into further or higher education, training or employment.** M
- The corporate parenting picture is very good with sustained high attainment, health plans for all accommodated children, increased rates for foster and kinship carers, a new fully funded carers training programme (see no. 4), less children out of authority, all care leavers with pathway plans, a new care leavers service in Montague Row, and a new intensive care and support service agreed by the Joint Committee. The current data set for this commitment is under review and the development of appropriate outcome indicators is underway linked to the development of For Highland's Children 3. The current set of indicators overall is showing mixed progress. Both indicators for reducing the number of placement have declined with numbers increasing between 2006/7 and 2008/9 from 38 to 99 for 3-5 placements away from home and from 15 to 59 for 6 or more. Two indicators in relation to reducing the number of children looked after for 1y - <2y, 2y - <5y are in decline. The target of 100% of young people leaving care with a pathway plan is being achieved. Out of authority placements are showing a downward trend from 41 to 38 between 2006/7 and 2008/9. The total number of children looked after has reduced from 520 in 2006/7 to 457 in 2008/9.'
- 1.4 **We will provide better support for foster carers, including kinship carers, by investing an additional £420,000 over two years from 2009-10.** ✓
- New rates have been implemented for foster carers and a recruitment campaign launched. A specialist kinship carer worker is in place to provide advice and

support. The target for increasing the proportion of looked-after-children with a kinship carer is improving with 15.8% in 2008/9 from a baseline of 12.4% in 2007/8.

1.5 We will deliver and support a sustainable network of quality wraparound childcare and educational services for young children and their families by 2011. ✓

Implementation of the Early Years Training Strategy is on track to deliver a qualified workforce. Reports on extending pre-school hours and additional support needs have been approved with approach subject to consultation. The number of Associated School Groups with wraparound childcare has increased to 21, towards the target of 24 by 2010/11.

1.6 We will continue to raise levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy for pupils in pre-school, primary and secondary provision and maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and achieve the outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence. ✓

High levels of achievement within SCQF continue to be maintained and improvement is evidenced for the majority of indicators (7) across primary and secondary school reading, writing, maths and average tariff scores in S4, S5 & S6. Two primary school indicators for reaching appropriate levels in reading and writing are being sustained at 80.9% and 74.8% respectively. Benchmarking with other comparator authorities is on-going with some indication of the gap closing on the consistently high achievement in Highland in reading and writing. Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence is being accelerated in all sectors.

1.7 We will increase the number of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment to 87% by end March 2009 and we will, with our partners, review the target for 2011. ✓

Good progress continues to be made in increasing the number of young people moving into positive destination after leaving school for a baseline of 84% in 2006/7 the percentage now stands at 89% for 2008/9 exceeding the 87% target set. Further work is being carried out to enable the monitoring of number of care leavers moving into positive destinations. Very good progress has been made in increasing the numbers of young people engaged in recognised leadership and achievement awards baseline 767 in 2006/7 against 1995 participants in 2008/9 exceeding the 2010/11 target set of 1128.

1.8 We will place primary schools at the centre of our communities and will work to secure their long term future by developing community schools with a wide range of activities and services extending beyond the traditional school day. ✓

A capital investment strategy model has been approved by committee and an Estates Strategy submitted to ECS Committee on 21 May 2009. Overall the delivery of a 10 year modernisation programme is on target. Options appraisal for pre-school and primary provision in Greater Fort William is due early in 2010. A database is now in place to map school condition and capacity. Needs analysis is used to identify the needs of excluded groups and ensure opportunity for local learning opportunities.

- 1.9 **We will continue to develop Gaelic medium education in pre-school and primary schools as well as expanding Gaelic medium education in the secondary sector.** ✓
- Gaelic Medium provision has been expanded and enriches through the increases use of Gaelic in the whole school environment and using multi0media. Provision and uptake has been expanded. Work is being taken forward to provide analysis of provision to identify gaps and weaknesses and focus support. Baseline data is due at the end of October 2009. Further expansion of GME provision beyond current levels is compromised by a lack of qualified teachers and The Highland Council is at the forefront of efforts to address this short fall with partner agencies and the Scottish Government.
- 1.10 **We will continue to provide opportunities to enjoy the arts, sport and cultural experiences including through the Highland 2007 Legacy Fund, which aims to enhance and to promote the events, festivals and cultural programme of the Highlands.** ✓
- The Legacy Fund supported 141 in 2008/9. A baseline of 60% of seats sold at festivals supported by the Council has been established and will be monitored with next data return due for comparison in October 2009. The social and economic impact of Highland 2007 has been evaluated and Highland Homecoming launched for 2009. An Events and Festivals Strategy is in place and being implemented. It has not been possible to generate the proposed aggregated indicator for participation across arts, sports and cultural activity.
- 1.11 **We will give a high priority to Highland's children being healthy and active and implement the Highland Play Strategy.** ✓
- All Highland schools have achieved and are maintaining Health Promoting School status. The joint Council/NHS health improvement plan 'Your Choice' continues to provide focus for health improvement activity and monitoring of progress. The cardiovascular fitness of primary 7 boys and girls (no. of shuttle runs over a set time) shows improvement (girls 28 runs in 2006/7 to 31 in 2008/9, boys 34 runs to 37. Currently 50% of targets within the Play Strategy have been delivered and this is on target to deliver 75% by 2010/11. The use of the Outdoor Education Centre at Badaguish Centre has significantly increased from a baseline of 4020 users in 2007/8 to 7857 in 2008/9, targets are now under review.
- 1.12 **We will support civic engagement of Highland's young people through pupil councils, the post of youth convener, developing Youth Voice and representation in the Scottish Youth Parliament and working with Community Councils to lower the voting and candidate age to 16 years for Community Council elections.** ✓
- There five measures under this commitment and all are progressing well. All schools have pupil councils; a youth convener is in post with the annual recruitment process having recently been completed. Lower the voting age to 16 years for community council elections continues to be worked and will be determined by local consultation on the national review where age 16 has been recommended. Elections continue to run smoothly for Highland Youth Voice (HYV), members meet with Area Youth Forums.

- 1.13 **We will ensure a youth worker is active in every Associated School Group area and that a review is completed on leisure, recreation and development opportunities available to young people.** ✓
 The target to place active youth worker presence in each of the 29 school catchment areas has been achieved. Work is underway to complete a review of leisure, recreation and development opportunities for young people and will be presented to Council in December 2009.
- 1.14 **We will roll out a single smart card to all young people by 2011, giving access to leisure, libraries, arts and culture activities, youth information and school meals.** ✓
 The High Life card continues to be a success story with 86% uptake in secondary schools which is above the national average (80%). Work has been completed to integrate the national entitlement card into the High Life system allowing discounted rail and bus travel for young people. All Council and 5 community run leisure centres are now able to accept the card. The card is now in use at leisure centres, libraries and 1/3 of secondary school canteens. A plan is in place to convert the remaining canteens over the next 3 years.
- 1.15 **We will achieve Eco School status for all Highland Schools by 2011.** ✓
 Very good progress continues to be made across the three indicators evidencing progress on this commitment. There has been an improvement in the number of schools achieving the bronze, silver and green flag award levels. Between 2006/7 and 2008/9 number increased for the bronze award 20 schools to 89, for the silver award 12 schools to 62 and for green flag status the most prestigious level 8 schools to 28.
- 1.16 **We will focus on safe school transport, encouraging more healthy and environmental options such as “walk to school” pathways, safety support and safe cycle tracks.** ✓
 The target of installing 20mph speed limits of 97% by March 2009 has been met. Progress has been made in increasing the number of children walking and cycling to school and this now stands at 7875 for 2008/9 (48% primary school pupils) from a baseline of 7124 (41%) in 2006/7. From a baseline of 20% in 2004/5 there are now 76% of schools with agreed travel plans.
- 1.17 **We will work with partners to improve road safety for children and young people and to reduce child fatalities and serious injuries from road traffic accidents.** ✓
 Improvement has been achieved across the 3 indicators which evidence progress for this commitment. The number of schools participating in accredited ‘risk reduction’ schemes has increased from 44% in 2004/5 to 70% in 2008/9 for the Junior Road Safety Officer scheme and from 58% to 72% for cycling proficiency. In addition the number of young driver participating in PASS Plus driver education has increased from 239 drivers in 2006/7 to 353 in 2008/9.

We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the UK and Scottish Governments, to promote services for children and families

- 1.18 **We will work with the Scottish Government and Higher Education institutions to address the issue of supply of Gaelic medium teachers and seek funding for 2 new Gaelic Medium Primary Schools.** ✓
 Consultations have taken place on the establishment of two all Gaelic primary schools in Inverness and Fort William and the establishment of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) provision in Glenurquhart Primary School to include pre-school. Recruitment of teachers remains a challenge and the Council has submitted proposals for incentives to the Scottish Government and Bord na Gaidhlig to improve recruitment and retention.
- 1.19 **We will work with the Scottish Government to improve road safety, including the use of more mandatory 20mph limits.** ✓
 Program is now complete and the scheme is now being extended to cover 20mph limits in residential areas. Criteria for the ranking of 20mph limits and zones in residential areas is currently being drawn up and a paper on the proposals will be put before a future TECS committee for approval.
- 1.20 **We will work with the UK and Scottish Governments to maintain the principle of providing accessible, affordable childcare to all.** ✓
 There is ongoing liaison with the Scottish Government, and we have also supported Government nationally to promote the early Years Framework. A report submitted to Committee on extended pre-school agreed has initiated a period of consultation.

2. What we will do for Communities and Older People

- 2.1 **We will build and run 5 new care homes for older people** ✓
 Extensive consultation has taken place over the design of the new homes with planning permission granted for Inverness Fort William and Muir of Ord good progress is being made. Some details of the Tain site remain unclear and negotiations continue with NHS to maximise the opportunity for sharing faculties as the adjacent site is planned for the health centre. The preferred option for Grantown is to secure a joint facility with NHS however NHS currently does not have capacity to progress.
- 2.2 **We will work with partners and all levels of Government to alleviate poverty by increasing benefit uptake, advising more people how to maximise their income through advice on welfare rights and benefits, encouraging use of free or concessionary priced services, and providing specialist money advice.** M
 There is evidence of good progress across the indicator for this commitment with the exception of the average number of days to process new benefit claims and changes of circumstances. This is a changed SPI with a baseline in 2008/9 of 34 days however the target is 24 days by 2010/11. The outcomes of the remaining indicators are:
 - Increased provision of money advice and welfare rights by the voluntary sector 40957 customers in 2008/9 compared to 38139 in 2007/8. An increase in Council provision 1424 customers from 785 in the same

period.

- The financial benefit to customers receiving advice remains high with £3.4M achieved for voluntary sector customers and £402,110 for Council.
- The target to maintain uptake of free school meals at 77.6% or above has been achieved in 2008/9 at 78.9% although uptake in 2007/8 achieved 88%.
- The uptake of High Life leisure budget cards continues to improve with the number of cards issued now standing at 4668 in 2008/9 compared with 3558 in 2007/8.

2.3 We will commit a further £100k to promote benefit uptake across the Highlands from 2009-10.



The additional £100k has been allocated and reported to Resources Committee on 18 February 2009.

2.4 We will ensure continued provision of free personal care and will work with the Scottish Government to secure sufficient resources into the future.



The Council is committed to the implementation of the Scottish Govt eligibility criteria for FPNC and the associated time scales for delivery. A local target of 15 days for assessment has been set and performance against this will be regularly reported. Work is ongoing to develop an outcome based personal plan which can be shared electronically.

2.5 We will secure an increase of 600 houses suitable for older people and people with disabilities.



119 completions for housing for older people were achieved in 2008/9 this brings the cumulative total to 246 against the target of 600 by 2010/11 which is on track.

2.6 We will increase the number of older people (and others in care) who can be supported in their own homes by providing an additional £1m in each year from 2008-9 to 2010-11 and by investing £4.7m annually in aids, adaptations and telecare.



There are six indicators evidencing progress in the delivery of this commitment. Five are making good progress and the sixth is due to baseline in 2009/10.

- Those getting home care at weekends has increased to 1161 in 2008/9 from 909 in 2007/8.
- Those receiving evening or overnight care have also increased from 398 in 2007/8 to 487 in 2008/9.
- The % of older people receiving intensive care at home of between 10 and 20 hours has improved from 16% in 2007/8 to 16.6% in 2008/9.
- The numbers of older people receiving enhanced telecare services has also increased from a baseline of 60 in 2007/8 to 125 in 2008/9.
- The number of respite bed nights has been increased from 6379 in 2007/8 to 6896 in 2008/9 this is against a challenging target of achieving 9274 by March 2010.

- 2.7 **We will work with NHS Highland and other stakeholders (users, carers and voluntary organisations) to produce an integrated community care plan for: older people; people with physical and learning difficulties; people with complex needs; those with substance misuse, the health of homeless people and people with mental health difficulties. We will support them to live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible and ensure that both service users and carers can exercise more choice and control.** ✓

All indicators are anticipated to be complete in 2009 with a review required to set new ones. The Community Care Plan is currently under development and due for delivery by the end of the year. A stakeholder forum was established in early 2009 and regular forums are in operation. An adult protection committee along with partnership arrangements is also in place. Outwith the indicator set considerable work has been on-going, 631 adaptations have been completed since April 2008 and 540 cases within the private sector have been approved for grant assistance in 2008/9. A draft community care plan has been presented to the leadership group for discussion with the final version due to be presented to Housing and Social Work Committee in November before it goes out for full consultation. The draft has been informed by the views users and carers through the auspices of Highland Community Care Forum and the stakeholder forum meetings which have been taking place across Highland. The plan will inform a joint commissioning strategy.

- 2.8 **We will work with the Scottish Govt and our partners, especially NHS Highland, to meet the health and care needs of our population and reduce inequalities in health. This will include reducing alcohol and drug misuse, smoking cessation, reducing obesity and tackling poverty.** M

Overall there is mixed progress is being made as evidenced by the following:

- Alcohol related crime figures are dropping 1425 per 10,00 population in 2008/9 compared with 1661 in 2006/7
- Drug related crime has also dropped from 2160 per 10,000 population in 2006/7 to 1896 in 2008/9
- The number of drug related deaths has doubled from a baseline of 10 in 2006/7 to 20 in 2008/9.
- The Council is well advanced in preparation to submit evidence for a silver award under the Healthy Working Lives scheme.
- The overall figure for High Life leisure membership continues to show year on year improvement and now stands at 26629 against a baseline membership of 19789.
- Suicide prevention training is in place for professional Social Work staff with 26 trained.

Work is also on-going to improve accessibility to services for minority groups e.g. providing access to interpreting services or deaf communication project.

- 2.9 **We will improve Council houses by investing £20m to improve energy efficiency in 3000 houses and £7m to replace 1000 kitchens and 500 bathrooms over the next 3 years from 2008-9. We will set out a plan to ensure that all Council owned houses meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard** ✓

Good progress is being made against this commitment. From a baseline of 3%

in 2007/8 there were 22% of council houses meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard in 2008/9. The number of council houses with energy efficiency measures has also increased from a baseline in 2007/8 of 1849 to 2121 in 2008/9. The programme of refurbishing kitchens and bathroom continues with 468 kitchens and 203 bathrooms delivered in 2008/9.

2.10 We will develop an up-dated homelessness strategy in 2008 to set out how we will work with partners and the Scottish Government to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide responsive services to homeless people.

M

The homelessness strategy has been updated and a revised commitment is proposed of: "We will work with the Scottish Government and partners to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide responsive services to homeless people".

With the exception of use of temporary accommodation the indicators for this commitment are progressing well as follows:

- % of decisions notifications issued within 28 days of initial presentation has dipped from 63% to 57% between 2007/8 and 2008/9.
- The proportion of homeless households treated as priority need has increased from 71% in 2006/7 to 81% in 2008/9.
- A baseline has been established for homeless cases reassessed within 12 months at 6%
- The use of unsuitable temporary accommodation increased between 2006/7 and 2008/9 from 2 to 14.
- The proportion of young tenants who sustain a tenancy for more than 6 months is 88.5%

2.11 We will work with partners, especially the Police and the Scottish Government, to improve community safety by working to reduce: crime and fear of crime; anti-social behaviour; alcohol and drug related crime; reconviction rates; and violence against women and hate crimes. We will work also to improve levels of safe driving.

✓

Overall there is good progress across indicators as follows:

- Scottish Household Statistic at Highland level on resident satisfaction with their neighbourhood is not yet available for 2007/8.
- % of residents who rate the area within 15 minutes walk of their home as fairly safe or very safe has increased in 2008/9 to 95%.
- SCRA no longer provides data on the number of persistent young offenders.
- From a baseline of 74.2% the number of sex offenders requiring review who receive the review within national standards has increased to 83% in 2008/9.
- There have been increases in the number of reported hate crimes and incidents from the 2006/7 baseline to 2008/9 from 65 to 89 crimes and from 106 incidents to 135. However this is an anticipated increase as confidence level in reporting are reached.
- A review of anti-social behaviour policy is due September 2009.
- A baseline for responding to noise complaints within 1 day has been established at 85% in 2008/9.

- Data is not yet available on reconviction rates.
- Training programme not yet commenced on awareness of violence against women for staff of residential units.
- There has been a reduction in fatal/serious injury road traffic casualties from 198 in 2006/7 to 144 in 2008/9 overall and for children the figures have reduced from 12 to 5. The figures for those slightly injured have also reduced from 750 to 667 over the same period.
- There has been a slight increase in the number of households reporting concerns with speeding from 73% in 2006/7 to 75% in 2008/9.

2.12 We will deliver the Highland Archive Strategy which will see a state of the art Archive, Family History and Registrars Centre by 2009 as the hub of a network of local archive facilities, by working with partners where appropriate.



The new Archive Centre opened to the public in Inverness on 24 October 2009 and the Lochaber Centre has been completed. Discussions are underway with National Nuclear Decommissioning Agency to develop a joint archive. Creating accessibility to the Historic Environment Records via Service Points, Libraries and the Internet has been completed.

2.13 We will develop and encourage use of the Council owned Highland Museum and Art Gallery in Inverness, the Highland Folk Museum, and support a range of community run museums across the Highlands with advice, training and grant aid



The number of visits/usages of Council funded or part funded museums per 1,000 population continues to improve at 2100 in 2008/9 compared with 1074 in 2006/7. The number of winter festivals has been increased from 3 to 4 during 2008/9. While the numbers participating in the annual Archaeology Fortnight has dropped participation levels are still above 5000 and higher than the 2006/7 baseline of 4340. This measure is under review as timing and weather have a significant impact on perceived performance; a qualitative measure on positive experience is being investigated.

2.14 We endorse the 'Year of Homecoming' in 2009 and will develop a Highland strategy to ensure we play a major role in the celebrations.



Homecoming Highland was successfully launched and an exhibition and events programme for 2009 in place. 60% of awards from the Highland 2007 Legacy Fund have been allocated to Homecoming.

2.15 With our partners we will develop an Events and Festivals Strategy and will continue to support a range of initiatives such as Am Baile, the Feis Movement, the Blas Festival and the Royal National Mod.



Positive feedback from customers at the Blas Festival has been maintained at above the target range of 60-80% at 87% for 2008/9 (92% in 2007/8) and the target is under review. Funding levels for the Feis movement were maintained at £89K. The Council is also maintaining Mod presence in the Highlands once every three years. A baseline for dwell time on the Am Baile website has been established at 14.52 minutes. An Events and Festivals Strategy has been presented to Committee.

- 2.16 **With our partners we will provide opportunities for Life Long Learning.** ✓
- A partnership agreement with UHI and HIE has been developed to widen community access to UHI Learning Opportunities. Course and class provision by the Council is under review. Baselines against targets have been established for libraries provision 70% of national target for replenishing library stock achieved against the 2010/11 65% target. Children and teenage stock replenishing achieved 89% against the 2010/11 target of 67.5%. The percentage of library borrowers as a % of the resident population was established at 21.5% against a 2010/11 target of 23.5%. The baseline number of times Access Point terminals were used has been established at 927 times per 1,000 population. Data on adult literacy learners shows continued progress with 2321 participant in 2008/9 compared with 1828 in 2006/7.
- 2.17 **We will implement the Gaelic Language Plan and will review it annually. We commit ourselves to the principle of equal respect for Gaelic and English languages and we recognise the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highlands.** M
- Work is underway to establish a baseline for monitoring the number of clients accessing Services through the medium of Gaelic through the Service Centre. The proportion of people in Highland describing themselves as well disposed to Gaelic has dipped slightly from the 2007/8 baseline of 41% to 38% in 2008/9. The number of pupils who have Gaelic speaking parents/carers (including learner parents) increased from 40% in 2006/7 to 43.5% in 2007/8 data for 2008/9 is due October 2009. Work continues on the implementation of the Gaelic Plan and raising awareness of Gaelic language and culture.
- 2.18 **We will support the development of sporting activities and in particular we will encourage the development and growth of shinty.** ✓
- Good progress is being made across the indicators for this commitment in encouraging young people to play shinty from a baseline in 2006/7 of 1288 boys and 418 girls there were 1891 boys and 903 girls participating. Numbers of volunteers completing accredited Sports Leadership Awards continues to increase with 1995 qualified in 2008/9 compared to the baseline of 226 in 2006/7. A Sports and Physical Activity Strategy is now in place which includes the promotion of school/club links and pathways for children to take part in shinty at clubs in the community.
- 2.19 **We will develop a compact with the third sector (voluntary, charity and community organisations and social enterprises) in the Highlands setting out how we will support the sector and work together.** ✓
- All four indicators under this commitment are progressing well. Development of a compact is well advanced with extensive consultation having taken place during 2008 and early 2009 including one pan Highland and five regional Third Sector events. Levels of those self reporting engagement in volunteering has rising from 27% in 2006/7 to 29% in 2008/9. A review of funding arrangements for the sector is underway.
- 2.20 **We will agree a new Scheme for Community Councils by 2010 and continue to provide financial and practical support to them.** ✓
- Work is progressing on the review of community councils and this has a

national lead. The Scottish Government has published a model scheme and code of conduct and the Council has agreed to consult on a new Scheme for Community Councils in the Highlands, based on this national model. Work has commenced on consultation with community councils. Reducing the voting age to 16 will be dependant on the outcome of the national review. Training materials have been produced on CD Rom.

2.21 We will use the national standards of community engagement. M

A standard template has been produced to enable feedback from communities who have to been consulted by the Council. This is currently being piloted and will be rolled out following review. Through the Council's Public Performance Survey community views on how well the Council is 'listening to local people' is scored and a positive score is sought. The baseline was established in 2006/7 at -2 and this has improved to 0 in 2008/9. The pilot template is now in use for Fort William Waterfront development. Whilst that is a lengthy consultation exercise it is expected that early returns from the pilot will allow wider roll out by the end of 2009.

We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the UK and Scottish Governments, to promote services for communities and older people

2.22 As a member of the Hydro Carbon Fuels Working Group we will work with our local authority partners to campaign for fair and equitable fuel prices across the Highlands and Islands, and promote alternative renewable fuels to replace hydrocarbon based fuels. ✓

Focus on representing the views of Highland people is being maintained with a response submitted to the national consultation on the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation (bio gasoline). This followed a report to TECS Committee in January 2009 which highlighted potential problems for rural filling stations in infrastructure and storage. A study on the impact of bio gasoline is underway. The Council is a member of the Hydro Carbon Fuels Working Group organised by Argyll and Bute Council.

2.23 We will seek the support of the Scottish Government for the removal of the remaining discount on Council Tax for Second Homes. ✓

Issues raised with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth. Supported by the Scottish Government Rural Affairs and Environment Committee, but no indication from Scottish Government that representations will be successful.

3. What we will do for the Economy

3.1 We will work with the Scottish Government, the business community, HIE and the third sector to promote business growth including more local businesses and social enterprises through the establishment of business gateway by 2009 and other Council support. M

With the onset of recession the focus of work has shifted to limiting the impact of recession on the Highlands. A recession action plan is in place and regularly reported to Council. Indictors for this commitment show mixed progress. The

business start up rate has dropped to 4.6 per 1,000 per population from a baseline of 5.7 in 2006/7. Support for business start ups has been transferred from HIE to the Council through the Business Gateway a new baseline will be established in 2008/9 although early data is positive as over 600 businesses have been supported since April this year. The % of non-householder planning applications dealt with within 2 months has dropped from 47.4% 2006/7 baseline to 44.08% in 2008/9. Good progress has been made on the development of the Nigg Yard Development Master Plan to adopt as supplementary guidance supporting a Compulsory Purchase Order. SEA and Flood Risk Assessment are now in preparation.

- 3.2 We will work with the Scottish Government, HIE and the private sector to promote national key sectors namely: energy, food and drink, life sciences, financial services, tourism and creative industries through engagement in strategy development and a range of initiatives.** ✓
- There is effective strategy development across a range of activities engaging with key partners including HIE. A new tourism Action Plan has been produced and the Council entered into a Partnership Agreement with Visit Scotland for 2008/9 increasing resource allocation for marketing activity. Within Creative Industries an external evaluation of the Highland & Islands Film Commission has been carried out. There is an on-going review/refresh of the Renewable Energy Strategy including marine renewables.
- 3.3 We will work with the Scottish Government, local partners and the private sector to enable 6,000 new houses, with appropriate amenities to be built in the Highlands between 2007-8 and 2010-11, with 2,000 of these affordable houses for rent and low cost home ownership of which 600 will be for older people and people with disabilities.** ✓
- Key indicators for this commitment are growth in the population and new house builds. The population as increased from 2006/7 baseline 215,310 to 219,400 in 2008/9. Annual housing completion rates have dipped slightly during 2008/9 due to the down-turn in the economy resulting in a fragile housing market. Overall cumulative completion figures are on target at 3452 homes against a 6000 target for 2010/11. Numbers on single and small plot developments are holding up reasonably well and the fall in completions has been mainly on large sites. The cumulative total for affordable homes completed rose to 946 in 2008/9 against a target of 2000 by 2010/11. In addition the Open Space Guide has now finalised following public consultation and preparation started on Supplementary Guidance on Developer Contributions.
- 3.4 We will work with the Scottish Government to explore new funding models for building and securing additional Council Houses to help to address the high demand in many parts of the Highlands** ✓
- The Council has submitted a bid for funding from the Scottish Government that would allow a new build programme of 51 houses. Discussions are continuing with the UK and Scottish Governments on potential policy and funding options that may allow a larger scale programme.
- 3.5 We will develop Highland tourism – our most significant industry - in partnership with the business sector, VisitScotland, EventScotland and HIE.** ✓

We will focus on opportunities such as Gaelic, green tourism, events and activities. We will improve the Council's own services for visitors.

As mentioned above the Council entered into a Partnership Agreement with Visit Scotland. The value of investment from tourism has increased from £665M in 2006 to £756M in 2008. The % of location enquiries for film and television converted into projects has been maintained at 34% during 2008/9 compared to the previous year.

3.6 We will recognise and support the importance of the Cairngorm National Park to the Highland economy. ✓

Visitor numbers to the park are increasing from a 2006/7 baseline of 1,458,870 to 1,480,690 in 2008/9. The LEADER programmes of the Council and the Park Authority are jointly funding projects and investigating other LEADER opportunities for support to local businesses.

3.7 We will work with HIE, Scottish Development International and statutory infrastructure providers to make the Highlands one of the most attractive places to do business in Scotland. ✓

Measuring progress will focus on the number of hectares of vacant and derelict land remediated including sites accessed for future use. This is a new initiative and work has commenced with desk top and site investigative work on the first year's prioritised sites in the Councils' Vacant and Derelict Land Fund Plan, monitoring has commenced for reporting in 2009/10.

3.8 We will work with the Scottish Govt, HIE and the private sector to support the provision and use of high speed broadband services for our businesses and communities. ✓

Delivery of broadband to Council properties has increased from the baseline of 96 premises in 2007/8 to 284 in 2008/9. Development of indicators for monitoring non-council premises due by the end of 2009. HIE and British Telecom have made presentations to Planning, Environment and Development Committee on the issues facing provision of high speed broadband services.

3.9 We will prepare a new Highland Development Plan and a Coastal Development Strategy by 2009, and will prepare 3 Aquaculture Framework Plans by 2011, which will enhance the conditions for balanced and sustainable economic growth for Highland communities. ✓

Work is underway on the preparation of the Highland-wide Local Development Plan, with significant progress being made with public consultation taking place following committee consideration in autumn 2009. Work is underway and on target to produce three Aquaculture Framework plans by 2010/11.

3.10 We will prepare 3 new Local Development Plans which will provide detailed planning guidance and will ensure full community participation in their preparation. M

Work on new local development plans is progressing well and work continues on the Sutherland and West Highlands and Islands local plan to enable adoption by the end of 2009. Work is programmed to begin the new Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan by early 2010. The indicator monitoring the % of house-holder planning applications dealt with within 2 months has fallen back below the 2006/7

baseline of 79.6% to 74.4% in 2008/9. This indicator has more recently moved back above 2006/7 level.

- 3.11 We recognise the world class skills of the workforce at Dounreay and will work in partnership with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency and the Scottish and UK Governments to safeguard and enhance the social and economic environments of Caithness & North Sutherland during the Dounreay decommissioning.** ✓

A 50 point action plan was produced by Caithness and North Sutherland Partnership in December 2007 and with many actions undertaken this is now being refocused into a 10 point plan. A second annual conference was held in October 2008 with emphasis on the launch of applications for leases for marine and tidal devices in the Pentland Firth and Orkney by the Crown Estate. The indicator relating to maintaining job in the Caithness and North Sutherland Area has been baselined by HIE for 2008/9 at 129.75 jobs this is above the annual target of 100. The level of public services is being maintained.

- 3.12 We will pursue initiatives to support the procurement of local products and services by the Council and others.** ✓

An action plan to support local food is in place. The recording and reporting of the numbers of bids received from target organisations is in place due for first report during 2009/10. Records are also now being kept of the location and size of organisations submitting bids for Council contracts. Meet the buyer events have been organised across Highland to advise businesses on public procurement opportunities.

- 3.13 We will support communities in the formation of local trust groups to buy, manage or have a stake in land, property or other assets on behalf of their community** M

Key indicators for this commitment are:

- Increase the number of communities confident to hold assets, the baseline for this measure is 45 communities in 2007/8 during 2008/9 this increased to 52 cumulatively.
- Work is on-going to meet the target to establish web-based guidance for internal and external use by the end of 2009.
- A target has been set to support 400 community led projects and plans via LEADER by 2010/11. A baseline has been established in 2008/9 of 37.
- Work on engaging community groups in community based economic development was delayed due to issues with start-up of the LEADER programme, however data is now being collected and for quarter 1 in 2009/10, 65 communities have been engaged in community based economic development.

- 3.14 We will work with the Scottish and UK Governments and partners to prevent and reduce poverty by supporting more people into sustained employment.** ✓

To date the Council has supported 911 people into work through grants and loans programmes to businesses this is set against a target of achieving 1000 by 2010/11. Leverage from other sources for the Fairer Scotland Fund achieved £1.041M in 2008/9 which is 87% compared to the target of 75% annually. The number of parents supported into work during 2008/9 increased to 138 from a

baseline of 103 in 2006/7. There has been a reduction in the number of lone parents experiencing a positive outcome towards employment from 74 in 2006/7 to 37 in 2008/9.

- 3.15 We will work with employers, further education colleges and other partners to increase the training and apprenticeship opportunities across the Highlands, with a 33% increase in the number employed by the Council by 2010-11 (a rise to 200).** ✓
- There are two indicators for this commitment and both are progressing well. The number of trainees and apprentices employed by the Council has increased to 200 in 2008/9 compared with 150 in 2007/8. A baseline has been established for monitoring the number of apprentices (17) taken on by other employers supported by the Council's Employment Grant Scheme (subject to ESF support).
- 3.16 We will continue to decentralise Council jobs throughout the Highlands and will work with partners to identify opportunities for further dispersal of public sector jobs.** ✓
- The % of jobs located outwith Council Headquarters is being maintained at 95.8% a target of 96.2% has been set for 2010/11.
- 3.17 We will work with the UHI and HIE to support the award of full University Title to include research degree awarding powers and ensure the development of its academic research capability as the basis of economic development. We will support the development of a new, high quality Inverness campus as an essential part of the UHI network.** ✓
- The planning application for the Beechwood Campus has been received by the Council. The Planning & Development Service is working closely with other Services and agencies to ensure delivery of this local outcome for the Highland Single Outcome Agreement.
- 3.18 We will work with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig – Scotland's Gaelic College – to develop partnership projects which will support the Council's objectives for Gaelic** ✓
- A partnership agreement with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is now in place and will be implemented during 2009. Proposals were submitted to the Gaelic Committee in May 2009 to recommend free place and discounts for participating in Highland Council Gaelic language courses. Recording mechanism will be in place to record and report on uptake with links to staff PDP's and CPD.
- 3.19 We will continue implementation of the Council's Memorandum of Understanding with Nova Scotia to ensure collaboration on a range of mutually beneficial language and cultural projects** ✓
- On-going and cultural projects taken forward as opportunities arise. Most recent exchange was the placement of two trainee Gaelic teachers within the Council area and this offers a potential future source of teacher to alleviate recruitment difficulties.
- 3.20 We will invest £54 million over the next three years to maintain the quality of our road network and carry out improvements to our lifeline roads and bridges.** M

A programme of lifeline roads is underway on Salen/Kilchoan, Staffin and Torridon/Lochcarron roads. The following are the key outcomes for indicators:

- A total of £18M against a target of £54M for 2010/11 has been invested to date to maintain the quality of the roads network and improve lifeline roads and bridges.
- Against a target of 34% of the road network being considered for maintenance treatment 34.5% has been achieved in 2008/9 although this is lower than the previous two years with 39.2% achieved in 2007/8.
- The number of council and private bridge which fail to meet the European standard of 40 tonnes is not reducing and currently stands at 31.3% against a target of 26%.
- A baseline has been established for the number of footpaths and roads with disabled facilities and vulnerable persons design features at 51 in 2008/9 with a target of achieving at least 25 new features each year.

3.21 We will work with the bus operators to enhance, develop and promote the bus network in both rural and urban areas, improving the quality, frequency and accessibility of buses. ✓

A major exercise in accessing total bus availability throughout Highland area. The outcome of indicators for this commitment are as follows:

- The number of people using the bus has increased from 6.5M in 2007/8 to 6.6M in 2008/9
- Increasing bus numbers is determined by available resources, monitoring is not consistent as dependant on returns of commercial providers with concerns of the sensitivity of proving data.
- The number of buses with low floor access for vulnerable persons has increased from 112 in 2007/8 to 120 in 2008/9.
- The number of community transport schemes supported has increased from 17 in 2007/8 to 22 in 2008/9.

3.22 We will promote the development of an integrated transport network. ✓

Work is on-going to link and integrate timetables across all modes of transport. The number of lifeline ferry slipways to remote communities which have modern standards and safe layout increased from 4 to 5 during 2008/9 with Raasay nearing completion.

3.23 By 2009, we will implement an agreed £6m programme of traffic management and streetscape improvement measures in Inverness City Centre and will consider other arrangements which will reduce traffic congestion and improve the quality of the environment. ✓

A 5% reduction in traffic volumes in core Inverness City streets has been achieved, target for 2010/11 is 10%. Figures for the use of public transport in and around Inverness have increased from 3M in 2007/8 to 4.7M in 2008/9. The Inverness Streetscape project has been completed and work is starting in Dingwall.

3.24 We recognise the multi-cultural society we live in and welcome migrants and their families settling in our communities and will increase English Language tuition to assist their integration. ✓

Good progress is being made under this commitment with two indicators improving and one sustained as follows:

- The number of new learners supported with English Language tuition has increased from 758 in 2007/8 to 1128 at the end of December 2008.
- Inward migrant families supported, who have limited English increased from 285 in 2007/8 to 391 at the end of February 2009.
- The levels of community acceptance of new residents have been maintained at 82% as evidenced through the annual Public Performance Survey.

3.25 We will work through the Highlands and Islands European Partnership and the Scottish and UK Governments to secure the maximum benefit for the Highlands from the European funding programmes for the region and play a full part in key European organisations. ✓

An annual report on EU activity was approved by Council in February 2009 with Council priorities identified. The compilation of Council EU priorities and network membership was reported in the February 2009 Resources committee. Take up of EU grant has increased in 2008-9. During this period £1.319m of EU funding from structural funds was approved, relying on £2.103m of Council resources and £235k of partner contributions. In addition for trans-national projects, £3.012m of EU funding is approved, with £2.358m of Council funding and £562k of partner match funding.

We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the UK and Scottish Governments, to develop our economy:

3.26 We will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and HITRANS to improve road safety and journey times on the trunk road network serving the Highlands, in particular by upgrading the A9, A96 and A82 to provide economic benefits and sustainability. ✓

The Council is an active member of the Road Safety Group on the A9 and A82 trunk road. An action plan is being worked on with Scottish Government and this is due to TECS committee in September 2009.

3.27 We will work with the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland to have the Inverness Trunk Link Road included in the trunk road programme, with the objective of completing the Eastern Section by 2012/13, to provide access to the UHI Inverness campus site, and the River and Canal crossing by 2015 ✓

Continue to meet with Transport Scotland on transfer of Trunk Road Link (TRL) east and co-ordination of how the TRL west link is to be developed and moved forward. An action plan is being worked on with Scottish Government and this is due to TECS committee in September 2009.

3.28 We will work with Highlands and Islands Airports, HITRANS, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to attract new and enhanced air services into the Highlands at all airports and will continue to work to safeguard Inverness to Gatwick flights, campaign to reinstate the Inverness to Heathrow flights and to develop Wick airport. ✓

Continue to monitor services and make use of all opportunities to highlight the importance to business of London air links. Additional summer routes being added.

- 3.29 **We will work with partners to improve local, national and freight rail services including shorter journey times.** ✓
Working with Network Rail and First Scotrail to enhance level of rail service in Highland where opportunities present themselves.
- 3.30 **We will continue to engage with Scottish Water and others to ensure that lack of infrastructure does not hold up housing and other developments** ✓
Quarterly liaison is taking place with Scottish Water (SW) to ensure that there is effective infrastructure in place. The system of regular liaison feeds into SW investment priority plan. A baseline has been established to monitor the reduction in the number of water supply areas (WTW) and waste water treatment (WWT) works that are constrained. For 2008/9 these stand at 7 WTW and 20 WWT.
- 3.31 **We will press for the Scottish and Westminster governments to write off, or give financial support, to ease the very high levels of Housing Debt affecting the Council and its tenants.** ✓
The UK government remain unwilling to consider debt write off except in the case of housing transfer. It has not been possible to agree a method of rescheduling debt with the UK Treasury that would not involve longer term increases in debt servicing costs for the Council, although significant savings have been achieved on loan charges this year through treasury management activity. The Chair of Housing and Social Work continues to lobby Scottish and UK Governments on the issue of housing debt.
- 3.32 **We will monitor any further temporary closures of Post Offices in the Highlands and contest any further reduction in the network to 2011.** ✓
During 2008-9 Post Office Limited (POL), as part of a national review closed 17 Post Offices, with a further seven relocated and four new outreach post office facilities provided for remote communities. One was reprieved. Since then there have been eight temporary closures; seven have re-opened (five as outreach services). The Council continues to engage with communities affected.
- 3.33 **We will continue to seek a strategic shift in the ownership of marine resources by working with the Scottish Government and pressing the UK Government to conduct a full review of the Crown Estates.** ✓
UK Government has not implemented changes via the Marine Bill and lobbying activity continues at Government level as the opportunity arises. We are developing a constructive relationship with the Crown Estate on offshore and marine renewables development including progressing a Memorandum of Understanding on community benefit.

4. What we will do for our Environment

- 4.1 **We will produce and implement a climate change strategy for the Highlands which will reduce our impact on the environment and adapt our services to** ✓

cope with the impact of climate change.

Carbon reduction targets are being met (see comments at 4.7 below). A new Carbon Management Plan is complete with actions set to 2012 including a communication plan. Work started towards implementation of Carbon Reduction Commitment. Internal and community adaptation workshops have been carried out with the results feeding into the development of the adaptation strand for the strategy. Self Assessment against the requirements of the Scottish Local Authority Climate declaration is 22/30 at the end of 2008/9. Performance is scrutinised at Climate Change Working Group.

- 4.2 **We will continue to work with the Scottish Government, UK and EU partners to promote and enhance forestry, farming, fishing and crofting in the Highlands. We will ensure their continued importance in supporting sustainable rural communities - and coastal communities who depend on the marine environment - and we will support projects which seek to enhance the value of primary products from the Highlands, notably the local food sector.** M

On-going work with LESSG and protocols have been established for project spend, subject to resources being available. Data is currently being gathered on % of GDP contributed by forestry, farming, fishing and crofting. The delivery of at least 5 strategic projects linked to promoting the primary sectors by 2010/11 is on target.

- 4.3 **We wish to see by 2010, a total of 1280 megawatts installed capacity in suitable locations in Highland with improved capacity of grid connections and as part of the implementation of the Council's Renewable Energy Strategy, support the potential for marine energy in the Pentland Firth.** ✓

The installed capacity of renewables has increased from a 2006/7 baseline of 506MW to 819MW in 2008/9. Progress is being made on updating planning guidelines and the Scottish Government have produced a Marine Bill and established Marine Scotland, a Marine Spatial Plan is being prepared for the Pentland Firth by the Scottish Government. Devices under test and evaluation at EMEC Orkney.

- 4.4 **We will increase the number of communities assisted by the Council and partners to secure community benefit from renewable energy developments and work with them to promote greater community control and ownership of renewable energy projects.** ✓

During 2008/9 a further 12 communities were assisted bringing the total number to 36 from a baseline of 24 in 2007/8. Several developers have community benefit packages which substantially exceed the early agreement. Work is well advanced on reviewing Community Benefit policy and practice in relation to off-shore developments – this will also apply to onshore developments when completed. In the meantime individual on-shore developments continue and communities are offered assistance in negotiating CB as and when they request.

- 4.5 **We will use the Council's sustainable design guidance and publish measurable commitments on energy saving by promoting higher standards of thermal and solar efficiency for new buildings.** ✓

The Sustainable Design Guidance has been refreshed in preparation for

implementation alongside the Highland wide Local Development Plan; legislation came into force in August 2009. Baselines can now be established for indicators.

- 4.6 **We will ensure that all of our building projects, for both new and refurbished facilities, will comply with best practice in sustainability such that the Council is seen as an exemplar organisation in the field of sustainable design and facilities management.** -
- Key actions towards achieving target of 100% projects by 2010/11 include establishing a sustainability unit, training and development of staff during 2009. Breeam Excellent rating however does rely on other factors outwith design including site and location.
- 4.7 **As well as improving the energy efficiency of our Council housing stock, we will reduce the Council's energy use and carbon emissions by 15% by 2010-11 from our buildings, from a baseline of 2005, reducing or avoiding energy costs** ✓
- Good progress is being made in the three indicators for this commitment as follows:
- 14.99% reduction in energy use from 2004-5 base-line
 - 14.2% reduction in CO₂ emissions
 - £1.4m of energy costs avoided since 2005
 - On track for 4242.4KWh of renewable energy installed capacity
- The Council received a European award for reducing energy use in its buildings.
- 4.8 **We will increase the use of renewable micro generation technology sources to provide energy in the Council estate, with appropriate integration of Wind Turbines, Biomass fuel boilers, combined heat and power (CHP) and solar energy, increasing the overall rating from 1800kW in 2008 to a minimum of 4000kW in 2010.** M
- The installed capacity of renewable equipment for Council Buildings has increased to 1420kW in 2008/9 from a baseline of 1225kW in 2006/7. A programme of heating installation in council houses has started and on profile to deliver on target by 2010/11 with 57 houses having been upgraded. The programme is planned to accelarete towards the end of the plan period.
- 4.9 **We will build the Inverness South West Flood Relief Channel with construction works starting in 2009/10, subject to obtaining the statutory consents.** ✓
- This commitment is progressing well with a Flood Order in place and approval from SEPA for most Controlled Activity Regulation (CAR) licence, agreement has been reached with landowners over accommodation of works and compensation. Satisfactory tenders have been received but deferred as outstanding CAR licences are being pursued with SEPA. Anticipated commencement spring 2010.
- 4.10 **We will allocate resources appropriately between winter maintenance to drainage and watercourse maintenance, and local small scale flood prevention schemes, in recognition of the effects of climate change.** ✓
- Allocation of resources has been achieved and £335K allocated to flood risk areas.

- 4.11 **We will prepare a green travel plan for the Council by 2008, and work with the Scottish Government to encourage and promote green travel plans for our public sector partners, and all businesses and developments across the Highlands.** ✓
- Green Travel Plans in place for 5 sites including Council Headquarters, SWS Kinmylies, Lochaber House and two secondary schools. Work is supported by the Energy Saving Trust. Green travel planning web pages have been developed for staff, public sector partners and businesses across Highland. Working with HITRANS to encourage major public sector agencies to adopt plans. New targets agreed in the Carbon Management Plan.
- 4.12 **We will develop sustainable options for waste treatment within the Highlands and put measures in place to reduce the amount of residual waste disposed of in landfill outside the Highlands by 26,500 tonnes by 2013.** M
- The first infrastructure phase of the Waste Strategy is currently underway. Consultants have been appointed to report on viability and costs for a small energy from waste plant in Skye, the results of which may point the way forward for a wider strategy. Recycling continues to increase and reductions in municipal waste arising together with waste awareness continue to reduce residual waste disposed of to landfill out-with Highland. In 2008/9, 1,745 tonnes less residual waste was disposed to landfill outwith Highland than in 2007/8.
- 4.13 **We will increase the amount of waste recycled in the Highlands to 40% by 2010, and put measures in place to reach 50% recycling by 2013.** ✓
- Good progress being made with waste recycling increasing from 26.1% in 2006/7 to 32.73% in 2008/9. Longer term targets are more challenging with the need for behavioural change from the public and businesses. Lack of infrastructure in West Ross and Sutherland is preventing introduction of kerbside recycling. Awareness- raising continues to encourage the use of recycling services.
- 4.14 **We will limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill.** ✓
- As above good progress is being made with waste recycling. The amount of municipal waste collected that is land filled continues to reduce from a baseline of 73.9% in 2006/7 to 66.8% in 2008/9. However there are longer term challenges to continuing this downward trend including a lack of infrastructure for residual waste treatment, behavioural change as indicated above and a lack of national direction until 2010 when the National Waste Management Plan is due to be in place.
Neil to comment
- 4.15 **We will reduce paper use in our offices and recycle 50% by the end of 2009.** ✓
- Good progress is being made with recycling facilities in place at Council Headquarters and Kinmylies with a programme to rollout for further offices. Data has been baselined in 2008/9 at 9300 tonnes of waste to land fill from Council premises and 1722 reams of paper purchased. A paper recycling policy has been developed, desk side bins have been removed encouraging paper recycling. Guidance for schools prepared for the new term in 2009.
- 4.16 **We will give a high priority to community works, ensuring our communities** ✓

are well looked after through grounds maintenance, litter picking, street cleaning, education and awareness and by the use of enforcement measures.

All three indicators for this commitment show progress or baselines have been established as follows:

- The Cleanliness Index (sample of streets and land) has improved from 71% in 2006/7 to 76% in 2008/9.
- A baseline of 23 for 2008/9 established for the number of fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and littering.
- A baseline of 21 for 2008/9 established for the number of promotional events on litter picking.

4.17 We will work with our Local Access Forums to draw up and implement a system of Core Path Plans for the Highlands.



A draft Core Path Plan was completed for all areas and submitted to Scottish Government. A public local inquiry has been undertaken and the Reporter will advise Scottish Ministers later in 2009. A baseline survey will be undertaken during 2009 to monitor the number of people taking access to the countryside on Highland Council managed sites.

4.18 We will develop a policy for supporting allotments where there is demand.



Good progress is being made with a draft Allotments Policy presented to LESSG on target and available for public consultation. New guidance was also approved and supplementary guidance on open space has been adopted by the Planning, Environment and Development Committee.

4.19 The Council will work with the Highland Biodiversity Partnership and Local Biodiversity Groups to promote and enhance biodiversity within the Highlands and to implement the Scottish Government's strategy for biodiversity.



Biodiversity groups have been established and a programme is supporting 24 local projects over 3 years utilising Lottery Fund monies. The number of participants on ranger guided walks has declined significantly during 2008/9 to 6142 compared with a 2007/8 baseline of 11,256. The indicator is significantly affected by weather and is under review to consider more relevant qualitative indicator(s). The number of people engaged in biodiversity projects has been baselined in 2008/9 at 200. The percentage of planning applications where biodiversity check-lists are completed is a new measure for 2010/11.

We will also represent the interests of the Highlands by working with partners, including the UK and Scottish Governments, to protect and enhance our environment:

4.20 We will oppose any proposal for new nuclear power generation in the Highland area. We will continue to support the above ground storage of intermediate level waste from Dounreay until a Scottish waste strategy is agreed and implemented and object to the use of Dounreay or any other site within the Highlands for a national nuclear waste repository.



This is progressing well with no new nuclear generator in the Highlands and with

capacity for storage to allow for on-going decommissioning has been supported through planning permission for a new Low Level Waste (LLW) facility in the last quarter of 2008/9.

- 4.21 **We actively support a GM-free Highland.** ✓
This is being achieved with currently zero GM in the Highlands.
- 4.22 **We will work with COSLA and the Scottish Government to promote legislation to simplify the process of securing Flood Prevention Orders and will continue to progress Flood Prevention Orders for areas where there is a history of major flooding affecting residential properties.** ✓
The new Flood Bill received Royal Assent in June 2009. Deemed planning consent incorporated in Flood Order process. Flood Prevention Order and planning permission for Inverness SW channel and River Ness in place. Construction on SW channel due to commence spring 2010. Preliminary design for Fort William complete, detailed design for Dell Burn and Mill Burn Inverness complete.
- 4.23 **Highland Council will work for a review of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with a view to improving the legislation.** ✓
Government has advised that it is premature to Review Land Reform Legislation on advice of Scottish Natural Heritage and the National Access Forum. A conference to establish the way forward for land reform in Scotland, with a focus on the community right to buy, will be held in spring 2010. Continue to lobby and input to National Access Forum.
- 4.24 **We will continue to work with the Scottish and UK governments to seek effective control and monitoring of the movement of hazardous cargoes in the Minches and the Pentland Firth.** ✓
A joint meeting with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on initiatives to control shipping in the Minch. Joint work continues with a view to seeking additional statutory powers to control shipping in the Minch and Pentland Firth.

5. What we will do to make Highland Council more effective and efficient

- 5.1 **We will continue to pursue best value for our residents and service users, seeking efficiencies in the way we work and continuously review the Council's spending programmes. We will modernise our services to achieve an annual 2% efficiency savings target.** ✓
A detailed report on achieving the actions arising from BV1 was considered in May 2009 with all actions either complete or on target to be complete by the end of 2009. There has been positive feedback on progress from Audit Scotland on BV1. The BV2 Pathfinder has begun. From a baseline in 2006/7 of 80% the Council has increased satisfaction levels with Council services to 83% in 2008/9. Against an efficiency target of £8M in 2008/9 £8.201M has been achieved. The Corporate Improvement Programme is now in place and includes 9 projects which will introduce improved ways of working, supported by improvements in technology.

The Programme will deliver savings in 2012/13 to support the Council's future efficiency targets. Effective financial stewardship has been demonstrated through achieving efficiency targets and through positive audit report with no qualifications on the Council 2008/9 annual accounts. The Council budget continues to be approved in February each year.

- 5.2 **We commit the Council to the principle of appropriate additional decentralisation of political decision-making within the Council.** ✓
A review of Governance arrangements was undertaken in 2008/9 and outcomes agreed by Council in October and December 2008. It was agreed to improve access to decision making through web casting and improved video conferencing facilities.
- 5.3 **We will continuously review our performance to improve the way in which Council services are designed and delivered. We will do this by measuring our progress, reporting on it publicly and listening to our customers and communities.** M
A Corporate Performance Framework is in place and set out in the Corporate Plan. In addition to the annual corporate performance report information is made available through the Council's website and the annual newspaper supplement each winter and through the Council Tax leaflet each March. There are mixed outcomes for the two indicators against this commitment. Response times within target for complaints and enquiries handling have declined to 58% in 2008/9 compared to 71% in 2006/7. In response the Council has reviewed its complaints handling to improve performance. Compliance with the required response times for Freedom of Information requests has improved to 90% from a 2006/7 baseline of 88%.
- 5.4 **We will fulfil all of the Council's duties to promote equalities and to tackle discrimination and disadvantage - as an employer, in providing public services, in community leadership and partnership working.** M
Equalities monitoring is reported to committee on a 6 monthly cycle. The first composite progress report across all equalities strands was submitted in February 2009. Screening and impact assessments tools are in place, monitoring has been established but processes are not fully embedded across Services. Progress in gender equalities had been significant with the new pay scheme addressing potential pay inequalities across the Council. Also the number of women manager in the top 2% of earners within the Council has increased from 27.6% in 2006/7 to 34.3% in 2008/9. Similar improvements in the top 5% earners where women represent 38.8% of the top 5% earners compared with 35.9% in 2006/7. The number of public caller buildings accessible to the disabled continues to increase.
- 5.5 **We will make Council decision-making more accessible by web casting Council meetings and by other means.** ✓
A pilot was agreed by Council in October 2008 and was introduced in autumn 2009.
- 5.6 **We will make it easier and more convenient to contact the Council (through telephone, internet and other technology) including the extension of opening hours for telephone contact.** ✓

The Council is maintaining fulfilment of customer contact dealt with at first point of contact at above the 85% minimum target set in 2008/9 90% was achieved. The number of internal and external services dealt with at first point of contact within the customer services network is also being maintained at 52%. Opening hours remain at 9am-5pm with 24/7 emergency contact provision in place. An ICT Strategy was agreed which will introduce further improvements in the technology available to support better customer access. The development of a Web Strategy is being incorporated into the Information Management Strategy and a Customer Services Strategy has also been agreed for the Council.

- 5.7 **We will continue to develop Ward Forums for every council ward which will enable the public and community representatives to be informed of and to scrutinise Council activities and service delivery, including community planning.** ✓

During 2008 a detailed review and satisfaction survey of Ward Forums and Ward Business Meetings was undertaken with positive results, these were reported to Council in October 2008. All recommendations have been actioned with one still to be completed, the production of a good practice guide. A new electronic Ward Reporting Tool is now in place following significant cross Service working. This continues to be updated providing ward level analysis for Members and will soon be publicly available on the internet. All 22 Ward Forums are operational with contributions from across Services and partner agencies. Thematic Forums have also been set up e.g. youth issues, community safety. In Inverness, Wards are increasingly joining together in the form of City Forums, considering such themes as Flood Prevention, City Planning and Housing. Work is ongoing on the best practice guide and is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

- 5.8 **We will develop our Asset Management Plan to ensure that the Council owns or occupies only the appropriate number of buildings and that these are fit for purpose.** ✓

An update of the Council's Asset Management Plan was submitted to Resources Committee in June 2008. The three indicators under this commitment are being sustained with 59.7% of buildings suitable for current use, 53.5% of operational accommodation in a satisfactory condition and 80.1% of public caller building accessible to people with disabilities. The priorities set out in the Asset Management Plan are in line with improving the indicators including rationalisation of assets and improved maintenance programmes.

- 5.9 **We will value and consult with staff and trades unions through joint consultative committees between the Council and trades unions.** M

A well established joint consultative group (JCG) meets on a quarterly basis. The indicators within this commitment focus on sickness absence where non-teaching staff absence has reduced to 4.81% in 2008/9 compared with 5.04% in 2007/8. Teacher's sickness absence has also reduced over the same period from 4.03% to 3.15%. An update on progress on meeting 'Revitalising Health and Safety Targets' is due in December 2009. An update is also awaited on the % of Council staff with a personal development plan (PDP) which was baselined at 45% in 2007/8.

- 5.10 **We will work with the trades unions to deliver modernised working conditions and a single status workforce by 2008.** ✓
- A new pay and grading structure was implemented in February 2009, this removed potential pay inequality within the Council. Consultation on harmonised terms and conditions with joint trade unions is progressing and is planned for implementation in 2010. The next Employee Survey will run in 2010 and this will update the monitoring of data on the % of employees who consider the Council to be an above average or one of the best employers currently 26%.
- 5.11 **We will agree an annual training and development programme for elected members by December 2008 and introduce role descriptions and performance development plans for councillors.** ✓
- The outline training programme and PDP and Training Record for members was approved by Resources Committee on 3rd December 2008 and training in equalities, recruitment and selection, procurement and planning design was completed. Role descriptions were approved by Council on 5th March 2009. Members are now completing PDPs and a revised training programme is being rolled out.
- 5.12 **We will review the Council's programme and report progress against it each year.** ✓
- Reports are being submitted to Council in a regular basis in October each year. In addition detailed thematic reports updating progress have been developed for the Council's Administration Business Meetings and these are published on the Intranet.