

1. What we will do for Children and Families

- 1.01 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.** ✓

A new primary school has been opened at Acharacle and during 2011 four new Primary Schools are planned to start as follows:

- A new school at Milton of Leys (due for completion July 2011),
- Replacement schools at Aviemore and Lochaline (due for completion March 2012); and
- A new amalgamated school to replace the existing schools at Maryburgh and Conon Bridge (due for completion October 2012).

Refurbishment/extensions at 2 Primary schools at Tomnacross, Kilchumein and the Gaelic School in Inverness were completed, and on target to complete refurbishment at Farr, Milton and Roy Bridge by end 2010/11. In addition work will be starting on refurbishment at Aldourie due for completion Aug 2011.

Elsewhere in the Secondary School sector there are significant on-going redevelopments. Of the five Secondary schools scheduled for refurbishment. The extensions at Grantown and Nairn are complete with the refurbishment of vacated classrooms due for completion this financial year including the works at Thurso High. There have also been significant on-going redevelopments at Lochaber High School with phase 1 due for completion Oct 2010 and phase 2 by Dec 2010. Work on Plockton High School is due to start January 2011. We need to recognise however that further developments will depend on future available funding and corporate priorities.

- 1.02 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** ✓

As reported in 2008/9 *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. The remaining indicator being monitored relates to maintaining good or very good inspection reports of the Child Protection Committee during 2009/10 there were 5 gradings of 'very good' and one of 'good'.

- 1.03 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.** =

The corporate parenting picture remains good with the majority of indicators having sustained performance (12) or improving (6) across a large dataset. Indicators for reducing the number of placements have shown for 3-5 placements sustained performance with numbers between 2008/9 and 2009/10 from 99 to 89 from a baseline of 38 in 2006/7. There is improvement from 59 to 52 for 6 or more

placement. Three indicators relating to reducing the number of children looked after for 1y - <2y, 2y - <5y and 5 or more years are all either improving or being sustained. The proportion of young tenants sustaining a tenancy has improve slightly between 2008/9 (88.5%) and 2009/10 (89.9%). The educational attainment of looked after children is showing variable progress viewed as sustained due to the very small cohort which results in widely varying statistical outturns.

1.04 We will provide better support for foster carers, including kinship carers, by investing an additional £420,000 over two years from 2009-10. ✓

The Council has committed this investment. The target for increasing the proportion of looked-after-children with a kinship carer is improving with 16.3% with kinship carers compared to 15.8% in 2008/9 from a baseline of 12.4% in 2007/8.

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

The number of Associated School Groups with wraparound childcare has increased to 21 in 2009/10 (17 in 2008/9) against a target of 24 by 2010/11.

1.06 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. M

High levels of achievement within SCQF continue. Almost all SCQF indication Highland pupils perform well above the national average and the statistics continue to improve year on year. Improvement is evidenced for the majority of indicators (9) across primary and secondary school reading, writing, maths and average tariff scores in S4, S5 & S6. Two indicators both relating to achievement of appropriate levels in writing in primary and secondary school show a decline in performance most notable in secondary school where the proportion is 58.3% 2009/10 compared to 61.5% in 2008/9 and a baseline of 60.2% in 2006/7. The introduction of Curriculum for Excellence in August 2010 into S1 with its increased focus on literacy and numeracy will improve these figures. In relation to at least maintaining levels for schools inspected receiving satisfactory or better HMIE inspections, following changed methodology the target has been amended to 90% and data re-profiling is still showing good progress with 90.9% achieved in 2009/10 compared to the new baseline of 88% in 2006/7.

1.07 Improve the quality of learning, teaching and leadership capacity in our schools and communities. ✓

Progress is being made through validated self assessment where a HMIE supported exercise has been completed resulting in improvement actions which will be integrated into the next Service Plan. Agree actions will be monitored and progress reported annually.

1.08 We will increase the number of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment (including activity agreements) to 95% by end March 2011 and we will, with our partners, review the target for 2011. M

The number of children and young people taking part in recognised leadership and

achievement awards such as Duke of Edinburgh has again increased to 1876 in 2009/10 against a baseline of 767 in 2006/7. The number of care leavers in education, training and employment at 18 years has been baselined at 6.5% for 2008/9 data for 2009/10 is due at the end of October. The proportion of school leavers entering further/higher education, training or employment has dropped to 84.8% during 2009/10 this is the lowest level since a baseline of 89% was established in 2007/8.

1.09 We will place 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. ✓

The Scottish Government has committed to provide a 66% funding contribution towards the cost of a replacement Wick High School. This project, which will attempt to maximise the number of community facilities on a school campus, should commence during 2011 and be occupied by August 2014.

In addition the Council has identified a number of priority investments for school amalgamations that will be constructed within the next 3 to 10 years, subject to the appropriate government support for Capital borrowing being maintained at existing levels.

1.10 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 and increase the number of Gaelic learners in our schools. =

The number of pre-school primary and secondary pupils speaking Gaelic was baselined in 2008/9 at 1802 this been maintained at 1798 in 2009/10.

In 2009/10 there was one GM Primary school and 19 schools with GM classes. Of these, 16 schools had pupils in nursery and there were pre-school pupils in a further 5 commissioned playgroups/school. In 2009/10 there were 16 Secondary schools offering Gaelic to pupils progressing from GM Primary education and/or the Gaelic Learners. Of these, 12 Secondary schools provided classes for fluent Gaelic pupils of which 8 also taught subjects through the medium of Gaelic. Learner Gaelic classes were provided in 12 Secondary schools.

1.11 We will continue to provide opportunities to enjoy the arts, sport and culture and enhance and promote the events, festivals and cultural programme of the Highlands. ✓

The Legacy Fund supported 141 in 2008/9 and this has increased to 160 events in 2009/10. Participation levels at festivals supported by the Council more than 3 years old have significantly increased with the percentage of seats sold rising to 80% in 2009/10 compared to a baseline of 60% in 2007/8. A baseline was established in 2008/9 for the number of opportunities taken up to enjoy arts, sport and cultural activities at 3.44M this has increased in 2009/10 to 4.78M.

1.12 We will give a high priority to Highland's children being healthy and active and implement the Highland Play Strategy. ✓

The cardiovascular fitness of primary 7 boys and girls (no. of shuttle runs over a set time) shows improvement for girls 28 runs in 2006/7 to 32 in 2009/10, boys show a slight decline 34 runs to 33 (37 in 2008/9). Currently 71.9% of targets

within the Play Strategy have been delivered compared to a baseline of 20% in 2006/7 and this is on target to deliver 75% by 2010/11. The use of the Outdoor Education Centre at Badaguish Centre has continued to increase from a baseline of 4020 users in 2007/8 to 8944 in 2009/10. The Highland Council ensures that 'Healthy Weight' is written into the overarching Health and Wellbeing improvement initiative 'Your Choice to Healthy Living'. The NHS led Healthy Weight Strategy is complemented by local Physical Activity Strategies, particularly developments by Active School Co-ordinators and by increasing uptake of the successful Young Scot / High Life Card and access to leisure facilities.

- 1.13 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 are four remaining measures under this commitment as the requirement for all schools to have a pupil council was achieved in 2007/8 and has been sustained. The annual recruitment process for a youth convener was successfully 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 continue to meet with Area Youth Forums.

- 1.14 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 in 2008/9. A review of leisure, recreation and development opportunities for young people was completed and reported to the Education, Culture and Sport Committee in March 2010.

- 1.15 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.** C ✓

The High Life card uptake for 2009/10 increased to 89% compared to a baseline of 81% in 2007/8 this is above the national average (80%).

- 1.16 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 2009/10 number increased for the bronze award 20 schools to 123, for the silver award 12 schools to 106 and for green flag status the most prestigious level 8 schools to 42.

- 1.17 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.** ✓

Progress has been made in increasing the number of primary school children

walking and cycling to school and this now stands at 48% for 2009/10 (baseline 41% in 2006/7) variance in figures through falling school rolls. From a baseline of 20% in 2004/5 in 2009/10 there were 78% of schools with an agreed travel plan. The annual Hands-Up Survey of modes of school travel across Scotland show that fewer pupils in Highland (20.2%) are driven to school than the national average (23.3%). 40% of children walk to school in Highland, lower than the national average of 47%. The cycle to school figure in Highland (7.2 %) is three times that of the national average (2.3%). GO FOR IT the Highland Council active travel to school incentive scheme won a Scottish Transport Award during 2009. The target to install 20mph speed limits at 97% of schools has been achieved.

- 1.18 We will work with the Scottish Government and partners to reduce the numbers of fatal and serious road casualties and use 20mph speed limits to improve road safety for more vulnerable road users, particularly children & older people.** **M**

The number of schools participating in accredited 'risk reduction' schemes has decreased from 62% in 2006/7 to 60% in 2009/10 (70% 2008/9) for the Junior Road Safety Officer scheme and increased from 60% to 78% for cycling proficiency (72% in 2008/9). In addition the number of young drivers participating in PASS Plus driver education has increased from 239 drivers in 2006/7 to 363 in 2009/10.

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

- 1.19 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.** **=**

Progress on the supply of Gaelic medium teachers has to be undertaken in association with Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) as it is a national issue which is covered by Ginealach Ur na Gàidhlig, the Bòrd's new Ministerial Action Plan. BnG published the Action Plan on 13 April 2010 and delivering the Plan will be BnG's priority for the period to March 2012 One of its objectives is to implement a Teacher Recruitment Strategy. A new Chief Executive and a new Gaelic Education support officer been appointed at BnG last month; and the Council itself is in the process of identifying a Gaelic Education Development Officer. These important appointments will help to ensure this matter is progressed as a priority. Discussions continue with the Scottish Government on funding for new schools.

- 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 the Scottish Government and COSLA nationally to promote the Early Years Framework.

2. What we will do for Communities and Older People

2.01 We will build and run 5 new care homes for older people **x**

The Council has determined to find more cost effective means to provide social care and services for older people in the five communities involved in the care homes project. A programme of activity is presently in place to identify and progress the preferred options in each case.

2.02 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. **✓**

With the exception of free school meals there is generally there is good progress across the indicators for this commitment.

- Data for 2009-10 customer contact with CAB providers shows a reduction in contact from 40,957 customers in 2008-9 to 30,947. However this is likely to be affected by a new case management system introduced in the period and contact is likely to be under-reported. There has been an increase in the number of customers contacting the Council for money advice with 1863 customers in 2009/10 compared with a baseline of 479 in 2006/7.
- The financial benefit to customers receiving advice remains high with £4.53m achieved for CAB customers in 2009/10 compared to £3.4m the previous year. There was significant improvement in the figures achieve for Council customers at £1.38m compared to £402,110 in 2008/9.
- With Council support a new credit union for the Highlands (Hi-Scot) is being developed.
- The target to maintain uptake of free school meals at 77% of eligibility has improved to 80.3% for 2009/10 compared to 78.9% the previous year. Work is ongoing to improve choice of meals and encourage uptake.
- The uptake of High Life leisure budget cards continues to improve with the number of cards issued now standing at 5193 for 2009/10 compared with a baseline of 3913 in 2006/7.
- In relation to benefit claims the average number of days to process new claims and changes in circumstances has significantly improved from the 2008/9 of 34 days to 19 days in 2009/10.

2.03 We will commit a further £100k to promote benefit uptake across the Highlands from 2009-10. **✓**
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The additional £100k has been allocated and reported to Resources Committee on 18 February 2009 this commitment has now been met.

2.04 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 remains committed and is implementing the Scottish Govt eligibility criteria for FPNC and the associated time scales for delivery. A transformational change programme is taking forward a series of joint service developments and improvements with NHS Highland, also involving the Joint Improvement Team. Work is ongoing to develop an outcome focused personal plan and pathway and joint decision making with NHS Highland. A robust data collection and reporting system will be in place from April 2011. While the system is being put in

place the following proxy indicators provide information on the level of services being provided. The number of people over 65 years receiving free personal care at home at the end of June 2010 was 1,624. The FPC hours delivered to people in their own homes in the last of week of June were 10,113. The number of people receiving financial support for free personal care and nursing care in care homes was 410 for the same period.

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

372 completions and a further 130 on site during 2009/10. This brings the cumulative total to 618 completions since 2007/8 exceeding the target set for 2010/11 of 600.

2.06 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. Four are making good progress and one is being sustained and one baseline data is due shortly.

- Those getting home care at weekends has increased to 1159 in 2009/10 from 1134 in the previous year and a 1093 baseline in 2006/7.
- Those receiving evening or overnight care have also increased again this year from a baseline of 396 in 2006/7 to 538 in 2009/10.
- The % of older people receiving intensive care at home of between 10 and 20 hours has improved again from 15.4% in 2006/7 to 17.3% in 2009/10.
- The numbers of older people receiving enhanced telecare services has also increased from a baseline of 60 in 2007/8 to 285 in 2009/10.
- The number of respite bed nights has increased from 6379 in 2007/8 to 10433 in 2009/10 this has exceeded the target for 2009/10 of an additional 3000 bed nights by March 2010 from the 2007/8 baseline.
- Baseline information on savings arising from a planned reduction of people placed in residential care is awaited.

2.07 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. ✓

The draft Joint Community Care Plan was drafted for publication as per timescale, and NHS Highland and Highland Council decided it should be used as a vehicle for community engagement, and in particular in support of the 'reshaping care of older people' initiative, prior to publication. This work has taken place over this year, has included discussion across Highland communities, and over 900 individual responses. In the meantime, the key service and policy initiatives are being taken forward, and new joint structures put in place, with a particular emphasis on improved outcomes for service users, supporting them to retain independence and live in their own Homes.

- 2.08 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 with particular emphasis on changing attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol and supporting those in need with better prevention and treatment services.** **M**
- Overall there is good progress is being made as evidenced by the following:
- Alcohol related crime figures are dropping 1001 per 10,000 population in 2009/10 compared with 1425 in 2008/9 from a 1661 baseline in 2006/7.
 - Drug related crime has also dropped to 1747 per 10,000 population in 2009/10 from a baseline of 2160 in 2006/7 and 1896 in 2008/9.
 - The number of drug related deaths in 2009/10 has reduced to 14 following a significant rise to 20 in 2008/9.
 - The Council has just been received a silver award under the Healthy Working Lives scheme following the approval of a Substance Misuse Policy
 - The overall figure for High Life leisure membership remains stable at 29,107 in 2009/10 although a slight decline from 2008/9 (31,297) membership remains strong and above the 28,000 target set.
 - Suicide prevention training is in place for professional Social Work staff with a total of 35 staff now trained.
- 2.09 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 25.8% of council houses meeting all the criteria of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard in 2009/10. The number of council houses meeting the energy efficiency standard has also increased from a baseline in 2007/8 of 1849 to 4251 in 2009/10 up from 2121 in 2008/9 and exceeding the target set of 3000 by March 2011. The programme of refurbishing kitchens and bathroom continues with a further 555 kitchens and 133 bathrooms replaced during 2009/10 (totals cumulatively now stand at 1448 kitchens and 425 bathrooms).
- 2.10 We will work with the Scottish Government and partners to prevent and reduce homelessness and provide responsive services to homeless people.** **=**
- Overall the indicators for this commitment are being maintained as follows:
- % of decisions notifications issued within 28 days of initial presentation has been maintained at 57% between 2008/9 and 2009/10.
 - For homeless cases reassessed within 12 months there has been a small increase from 4.3% in 2008/9 to 4.9% in 2009/10 (amended SPI with new baseline 2008/9).
 - The use of unsuitable temporary accommodation reduced from 14 in 2008/9 to 8 in 2009/10. Further improvements have been made in the current year to date.
- 2.11 We will work with partners, especially the Police and the Scottish Government, to improve community safety by working to reduce: crime and** **M**

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 has been baselined for 2007/8 at 62.3%. This is a national dataset with 2009/10 due for publishing in late October 10.
- % of residents who rate the area within 15 minutes walk of their home as fairly safe or very safe has increased again in 2009/10 to 96.1%.
- Data and trends on the number of persistent young offenders has been established with good progress evidence from a baseline of 38 in 2006/7 the 2009/10 number is 15.
- From a baseline of 74.2% the number of sex offenders requiring review who receive the review within national standards has increased to 91% in 2009/10 a significant increase from 83% in 2008/9.
- There has been a decrease in the number of reported hate crimes and incidents in 2009/10 to 75 with 104 reported incidents. However while there have been a slight reduction between 2008/9 and 2009/10 there remains an expectation that figures will increase until a confidence level in reporting is reached.
- A review of the anti-social behaviour policy has been approved by Resources Committee.
- A baseline for responding to noise complaints within 1 day was established at 85% in 2008/9 during 2009/10 this reached 95% exceeding the target of 90% set.
- Data for 2006/7 has just been published at 2376 reconvictions this can be now be compared to 2194 in 2005/6.
- The training programme on awareness of violence against women for staff of residential units has commenced with 5 staff trained.
- There has been a reduction in fatal/serious injury road traffic casualties from a baseline of 198 in 2006/7 to 133 in 2009/10 (144 in 2008/9) overall and for children the figures have reduced from 12 to 9 (5 in 2008/9). The figures for those slightly injured have also reduced from 750 to 670 over the same period.
- There has been a reduction in the number of households reporting concerns with speeding from 75% in 2008/9 to 74% in 2009/10 the baseline is 74% in 2006/7.

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

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✓

The new Highland Archive and Registration Centre opened to the public in Inverness on 26 October 2009. In the areas, the Lochaber Archive Centre was completed in 2007, and following on from this, a new Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre was opened in December 2009. Discussions are underway, and plans being developed, with the Nuclear Decommissioning Agency to establish a joint facility to house the National Nuclear Archive and the Caithness Archive Centre. Following formal approval of the Council's Records Management Policy and Strategy in 2009, a Corporate Retention Policy has been approved in 2010 which

will facilitate proper management of the Council's records.

- 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 2009/10 compared with 1074 in 2006/7 (1766 in 2008/9). The number of winter festivals has been maintained at 4 during 2009/10. While the numbers participating in the annual Archaeology Fortnight has recovered and is now at its highest level of participation at 6148 in 2009/10 against a baseline of 4340 in 2006/7.

- 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 delivered, work on this commitment is now complete.

- 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 70-80% at 88% for 2009/10 (87% in 2008/9). Funding levels for the Feis movement were maintained at just above £89K. The Council signed a Service Delivery Contract with An Comunn Gàidhealach in May 2010. This provides for the presence of the Mod in the Highland Council area in 2010, 2014, 2017 and 2020. A baseline for dwell time on the Am Baile website was established at 14.52 minutes in 2008/9 this have increased to 19.8 minutes in 2009/10.

- 2.16 With our partners we will provide opportunities for Life Long Learning.** M

A partnership agreement with UHI and HIE has been developed to widen community access to UHI Learning Opportunities.

- There were 445 learning classes provided in 2009/10, course and class provision by the Council is under review.
- 60% of national target for replenishing library stock was achieved in 2009/10.
- Children and teenage stock replenishing achieved 78% in 2009-10 against the national target. Book prices have risen so number of items purchasable has reduced. As innovative stock management methods are introduced and physical books are increasingly replaced by new media the future relevance of this indicator in its current form may decrease.
- The percentage of library borrowers as a % of the resident population was 21% in 2009/10. While in number terms membership has remained stable, it is worth noting that recent Highland population increases are with one small exception not near existing libraries therefore percentage penetration appears reduced. These measures do not reflect an overall increase in physical and virtual use of libraries of +7.5% in 2009/10.
- The number of times Access Point terminals were used was 831 times per

1,000 population in 2009/10 a decline from the 2007/8 baseline of 913. This period has seen a significant rise in the use of Internet accessible personal devices together with price reductions, WIFI, and broadband advances.

- 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.** ✓
- Consideration have been given to monitoring the number of clients accessing Services through the medium of Gaelic through the Service Centre, However given the number of Gaelic speakers and learners in Highland and considering the volume of contact with the Service Centre establishing and maintaining monitoring systems is not cost effective. Service Centre recruitment continues to look for opportunities to employ Gaelic speakers. Recommendation is made to remove this measure from future reporting. The proportion of people in Highland describing themselves as well disposed to Gaelic has improved to 41% in 2009/10 compared to 38% in 2008/9 (baseline 41% in 2007/8). The number of pupils who have Gaelic speaking parents/carers (including learner parents) increased from 41% in 2006/7 to 49.5% in 2009/10.
- 2.18 We will support the development of sporting activities and in particular we will encourage the development and growth of shinty.** M
- There has been mixed progress made across the three indicators for this commitment. Both indicators encouraging young people to play shinty have declined in 2009/10 there were 1494 boys and 679 girls compared with 1891 boys and 903 girls participating in 2008/9, the baselines for 2006/7 were 1288 boys and 418 girls. Shinty development is achieved through a partnership with the Camanachd Association where staff changes have occurred there are regular joint meetings to plan improvement. Numbers of volunteers completing accredited Sports Leadership Awards continues to increase with 1806 qualified in 2009/10 compared to the baseline of 228 in 2006/7.
- 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.** ✓
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- All four indicators under this commitment are progressing well or completed. Development of a compact has been completed following extensive consultation during 2008 and early 2009. Following audit requirements new policy principles for commissioning services from the Third Sector and a Single Grant Scheme were approved at Resources Committee in February 2010. The Single Grant Scheme was operational from 1.10.10 to be reviewed after six months. Our latest survey results show that there are high levels of volunteering in the Highlands, with 36% of the adult population reporting they volunteer in some capacity, with nearly half of them (49%) saying they volunteer in more than one activity and over half (54%) volunteering at least once a week.
- 2.20 We will agree a new Scheme for Community Councils by 2010 and continue to provide financial and practical support to them.** ✓
- Work remains on target and a report on the outcome of the second of three planned phases of consultation will be considered by Council in October 2010. It is

anticipated that the revised scheme will be in place for April 2011.

2.21 We will use the national standards of community engagement.



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. It was planned to pilot the template at the Fort William Waterfront project, however this did not proceed and so the pilot failed to complete. A review of possible lessons learnt is underway and a revised template is expected by the end of this financial year. 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 this improved to 0 in 2008/9 and has dropped slightly towards baseline in 2009/10 at -1.

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.



A report was submitted to TECS Committee in September 2009 regarding the response to consultation on Low Carbon Vehicles which highlighted the requirement to support rural filling stations in relation to alternative fuels. Trials have taken place with electric vehicles, and a bid has been made to a Low Carbon Vehicle Procurement Scheme being offered by Transport Scotland. The scheme will provide financial support to bridge the cost gap between a conventional vehicle and its low carbon counterpart. 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

3.01 We will work with the Scottish Government, the business community, HIE and the third sector to promote sustainable business growth including more local businesses and social enterprises through the development and promotion of Business Gateway by 2009 and other Council support.



The recession continues to have an impact and for this commitment show mixed progress. The business start up rate has dropped further to 3.9 per 1,000 per population from a baseline of 5.7 in 2006/7 (4.6 in 2008/9). Support for business start ups has been transferred from HIE to the Council through the Business Gateway a new baseline has been established of 167 business start up in

2009/10. The % of non-householder planning applications dealt with within 2 months has improved to 59.9% in 2009/10 against a 2006/7 baseline of 47.4% (44.1% in 2008/9. Good progress has been made in relation to Nigg Yard with a Master Plan in place. A Strategic Environmental Assessment has also been completed and appropriate assessment is in place.

3.02 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. The Council has renewed its Partnership Agreement with VisitScotland for 2008/9 maintaining the allocation for marketing activity despite funding reductions and work continues with businesses on the actions from the Tourism Action Plan. The Highlands & Islands Film Commission has been dissolved and the Council's film unit work now relates to only the Highlands. Work continues with the new body Creative Scotland which has replaced Scottish Screen.

The Highland Economic Forum has been established to ensure continuing partnership working between the public and private sectors. The Forum's action plan has identified a number of high priority actions, and the Forum has establishes a number of short life working groups to progress activity in procurement, business development, energy and inward investment.

3.03 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 220490 in 2009/10. Annual housing completion rates have increased following a fragile housing market in 2008/9. Overall cumulative completion figures are making good progress having now reached 4534 (3415 in 2008/9) against a 6000 target for 2010/11. The cumulative total for affordable homes completed rose to 1430 in 2009/10 against a target of 2000 by 2010/11. Further work is on-going to prepare Supplementary Guidance for developers on Developer Contributions.

3.04 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



Discussions are continuing with the UK and Scottish Governments on potential policy and funding options that may allow a larger scale programme. The Council is currently building 107 Council houses which have been partly funded by Scottish Government grants.

3.05 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.

The Council has a Partnership Agreement with Visit Scotland. The value of investment from tourism increased from £665M in 2006 to £756M in 2008. However further research is expected in late autumn 2010 and it is anticipated there will be result in re-profiling past years data and a new baseline being established. The % of location enquiries for film and television converted into projects has declined to 33% for 2009/10 from a baseline of 37% in 2006/7.

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

Visitor numbers to the park have increased from a 2006 baseline of 1,458,870 to 1,495,263 in 2009. The Council is working with the Cairngorms business Partnership to support local businesses and the LEADER programmes of the Council and the Park Authority are jointly funding projects.

3.07 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. ✓

The Council has an agreed Delivery Plan in place with the Scottish Government which seeks to remediate 37.56 Hectares of vacant or derelict land. This Delivery Plan was reviewed and agreement reached with the Scottish Government in May 2010 on a number of new additional/alternative projects. Progress with the various projects within the Delivery Plan is ongoing and it is anticipated at this time that full programme spend will be achieved with the associated remediation of vacant and derelict land either achieved in full or in part.

3.08 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 437 by 11/11/09 when the project ended. In order to ensure that the Highlands & Islands does not fall behind in the provision of high speed broadband services HIE have, in conjunction with Highlands & Islands local authorities and other public and private sector bodies, submitted an application to Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) for the establishment of a next generation trial project throughout the area. If successful, this project will enable the creation of a Next Generation Access (NGA) broadband infrastructure capable of being extended to ensure NGA to the vast majority of the population of the region. The Council is continuing to work with HIE to support the provision of improved broadband across the Highlands and Islands. The Highland LEADER Programme has called for applications for Broadband funding and will by the end of October 2010 co-ordinate any applications received and submit a combined bid for a share of the Scottish LEADER Broadband fund (£800k).

3.09 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. ✓

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan has been amended and strengthened following a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and the consultation

process. 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. ✓

Sutherland and West Highlands and Islands local plan have been adopted. Highland-wide Local Development plan out to public consultation. The indicator monitoring the % of house-holder planning applications dealt with within 2 months has improved to 76.3% in 2009/10 compared to 74.4% in 2008/9 but remains below the 2006/7 baseline of 79.6%

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. ✓

An action plan is in place for Caithness and North Sutherland Area and this continues to be developed through the Regeneration Partnership. In relation to maintaining jobs in the area 116 jobs were secured in 2009/10 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. ✓

External spending with businesses for amounts of £1000 or more totalled £266.4M with 2959 businesses. Data is not available for payments below £1000. A total of £112.3M was spent with 1233 Highland businesses, of which £96.5M with 1140 SMEs in Highland. A total of £126M was spent with large companies of which £14M was spent with 41 large Highland companies. This data related to 2008/9 with 2009/10 data due December 2010. An action plan to support local food is in place and progressing well with last report to LESSG in June 2010.

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 ✓

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 2009/10 this increased to 57 cumulatively.
- Work is on-going to meet the target to establish web-based guidance for internal and external use this is now expected by the end of March 2011. The current review of the Council's policy on community benefit may have implications for community ownership, particularly in relation to renewable energy developments. That review is expected to be reported to Council in December 2010
- 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 this has now increased to 137 in 2009/10.
- Work on engaging community groups in community based economic development was delayed due to issues with start-up of the LEADER

programme, however a baseline has now been established for 2009/10 with 122 communities 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 the end of 2009/10 the Council supported 1284 people into work through grants and loans programmes to businesses this has exceeded the target of achieving 1000 by 2010/11. Leverage from other sources for the Fairer Scotland Fund achieved £4.074M for the three year period to 2009/10 which is a 77% rate of leverage compared to the target of 75% annually. The number of parents supported into work during 2009/10 was sustained at 128 compared to a baseline of 103 in 2006/7. There has been an increase in 2009/10 in the number of lone parents experiencing a positive outcome towards employment to 56 (37 in 2008/9) the baseline is 74 in 2006/7.
- 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 206 in 2009/10 compared with 150 in 2007/8. A baseline was established for monitoring the number of apprentices at 17 in 2008/9 taken on by other employers supported by the Council's Employment Grant Scheme (subject to ESF support) this improved to 19 in 2009/10.
- 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 95.2% in 2009/10 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.** ✓
- Outline planning permission was granted for the Beechwood campus in May 2010 and work is on-going to complete the Section 75 agreement. Council services continue to work together to ensure the award of title for UHI.
- 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 has been implemented. Proposals were submitted to the Gaelic Committee in May 2009 to recommend free place and discounts for participating in Highland Council Gaelic language courses. A baseline of 13 staff with Gaelic language training needs identified in PDPs was established in 2008/9 this has been increased to 36 in 2009/10.

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 ✓

In April 2010, a meeting took place in pursuance of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between The Highland Council and the Culture Division of the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture. Lewis MacKinnon, CEO in the Office of Gaelic Affairs with the Province of Nova Scotia visited the Gaelic Team in the Town House in Inverness and discussed how we might progress the three areas within the MoU, namely, Gaelic and cultural development, education, and tourism.

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. ✓

There is sustained of good progress for the following indicators:

- Expenditure on maintaining our road network and lifeline bridges is currently on target to achieve £54 million over the three year period.
- Against a target of 34% of the road network being considered for maintenance treatment 33.6% has been achieved in 2009/10 although this is lower than the previous two years it remains within tolerance of the target.
- The number of council and private bridge which fail to meet the European standard of 40 tonnes is sustained at 31.1% 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. This target has been met in 2009/10 with 39 features added including dropped kerbs, signage and ramps.

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 increased from 6.5m in 2007/8 to 6.6m in 2008/9, however we rely on future data being provided by all the bus operators and it is becoming increasingly difficult to collect reliable information from all operators due to the large number of service providers.
- The number of buses with low floor access for vulnerable persons has increased from 112 in 2007/8 to 120 in 2008/9 and remains at 120 in 2009/10 due to difficulties outlined above.
- The number of community transport schemes supported increased from 17 in 2007/8 to 22 in 2008/9, and remains at 22 in 2009/10.

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 remained at 5 during 2009/10 with Raasay recently completed and Sconser programmed in a new capital programme for 2014/15.

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. ✓

The streetscape improvements in Inverness City Centre are complete. A 38% reduction in traffic volumes in core Inverness City streets was achieved in 2009/10 (5% in 2008/9) exceeding the target for 2010/11 of 10%. Figures for the use of public transport in and around Inverness have increased from 3M in 2007/8 to 5.6M in 2009/10. Data is provided by external transport providers and this is under review to ensure there is confidence in the information provided.

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 one indicator improving and two sustained as follows:

- The number of new learners supported with English Language tuition was sustained at 1412 in 2009/10 compared to a baseline of 758 in 2007/8 (1539 in 2008/9).
- Inward migrant families supported, who have limited English increased from 285 in 2007/8 to 391 in 2009/10.
- The levels of community acceptance of new residents were not surveyed in the 2009/10 Public Performance Survey due to the budget consultation exercise. In 2008/9, 82% of respondents reported that they were accepting of people coming to live in the Highland to some or a great extent.

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 2010 with Council priorities identified. Take up of EU grant has increased in the 2009-10 bidding round. Since 2007, the start of EU transitional programmes for ESF and ERDF, £1.15m of EU funding was approved for Council projects, relying on £2.17m of Council resources and £80k of partner contributions. Trans-national projects submitted to the Cross Border Programme with the Republic of Ireland were approved in principle providing £1.24m of EU funding and £288k of partner funding for £126K of Council match funding. One new trans-national project from the Northern Periphery Programme was approved for a 2010 start attracting £65k from EU funds requiring £43k of Council resources.

The Council's priorities for engaging with the EU were confirmed in February 2010. Participation in network events was positive, notably with the appointment of the Convener approved for the Committee of the Regions, invitations for Council representatives to speak at high profile events and an award from Euromontana for Council participation on the topics of energy and quality food products

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 and Transport Scotland to deliver key trunk road improvements on the A82, A9, Nairn By Pass, A96 and the new trunk link road between the A96 and the A9 which will provide access to the UHI campus site.** ✓

Regular meetings being held with the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change to monitor progress on Scottish Transport Projects Review (STPR) projects. The Scottish Government have commissioned design work on the A96 corridor from Nairn through to Inverness. They have also announced a 3.2km extension to the dual carriageway on the A9 at Crubenmore.

- 3.27 We will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and British Waterways to examine and agree solutions for completing the link road between the A9/A96 and the A82 trunk roads, including crossing the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal.** ✓

£21.5m (gross) allocated within Council's capital programme which includes £5 million contributions from developers. Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) Stage 1 assessment complete and technical options for crossing the River Ness and the Caledonian Canal are being prepared in consultation with SEPA and Historic Scotland.

- 3.28 We will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and other local Agencies to promote local improvements to the trunk road network at locations including Berriedale Braes and Torgoyle Bridge.** ✓

The Scottish Government have agreed to progress a geotechnical study (jointly funded by The Highland Council/HITRANS/DSRL) to determine the viability of improving the road alignment at the north hairpin on the Berriedale Braes (A9). Transport Scotland have been provided with the technical information to allow the delivery of local improvements on the approaches to Torgoyle Bridge (A87) should funding become available.

- 3.29 Work with Highlands and Islands Airports, HIE and partners to attract new and enhanced air services into the Highlands at all airports. We will continue to work to safeguard Inverness to Gatwick flights, campaign to reinstate the Inverness to Heathrow flights and develop Wick Airport.** =

HITRANS have commissioned a report from Mott MacDonald to bring forward an updated strategy for the Highlands and Islands Air Network. This project has completed its data gathering and consultation stage and is due to come before the HITRANS Board shortly. It is the intention of HITRANS to present this report to coalition MPs at Westminster but the exact timing of this is still to be determined but is likely to be early next year.

The report will be emphasising the importance of the strategic air links to London, opportunities for slots at Heathrow and the potential for the reintroduction of an Inverness to Heathrow air link as well as the sustainability and protection of existing services and consolidation of the internal air network.

At Inverness there has been an expansion of charter leisure services to Europe as well as new links to Manchester, Southampton and Birmingham by Flybe. Flybe have also indicated their intention to open up services to Schiphol Airport,

Amsterdam which is a key European hub. This will provide new opportunities for accessing long haul flights to the Far East and Australasia. This is dependent on existing Flybe services from Inverness bedding down and the economics of the business case as we move forward.

3.30 We will work with partners to improve local, national and freight rail services including shorter journey times. ✓

Following the successful launch of the rail service linking Grangemouth with Inverness in March 2009, lobbying for additional services will continue, with the possibility of new freight transfer venture at Fort William.

3.31 We will continue to engage with Scottish Water and others to ensure that lack of infrastructure does not hold up housing and other developments ✓

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 this stood at 7 WTW and 20 WWT. However Scottish Water do not provide information on a regular basis, and there do not appear to be any issues arising in relation to water supply and wastewater treatment, given the downturn in house building.

3.32 We will press for the Scottish and UK governments to write off, or give financial support, to ease the very high levels of Housing Debt affecting the Council and its tenants. =

The Council's Administration continues to lobby Scottish and UK Governments on the issue of housing debt.

3.33 We will monitor any further temporary closures of Post Offices in the Highlands and support communities contesting any further reduction in the network to 2011. =

During 2009/10 Post Office Limited (POL) closed seven post offices temporarily primarily due to the resignation of sub-postmasters. During the year there were four re-opened which had been closed in 2008/9 and a further three closed during 2009/10 were re-opened. The Council continues to engage with communities affected and POL to seek local solutions when temporary closures take place.

3.34 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. ✓

Council continues to work constructively with Crown Estate Commissioners (CEC) to ensure that tangible community benefits arise from the expected growth in the off-shore renewable energy sector around the Highlands. Part of this process is the agreement of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the CEC, which Highland Council is leading on for Highlands & Islands local authority partners. Council is also working with the Scottish and UK Governments to affect a review of the management of the Crown Estate in Scotland. The subject will be debated at the next Convention of the Highlands and Islands, to be held in Orkney.

4. What we will do for our Environment

4.01 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. ✓

The Council's strategy covers both carbon reduction and adaptation. Carbon emissions are reducing from Council buildings, business travel, fleet, internal waste, street lighting and water. The target was exceeded in 2009-10 for emissions from travel (8.5% reduction against 6% target) and water (51% against 10% target), it was met for street lighting (2% target) and is below target for buildings (5.2% against 6% target) and internal waste (3.6% against 10% target). The Council is registered for the UK Carbon Reduction Commitment energy efficiency scheme. For adaptation, the draft strategy is prepared for public consultation with implementation planned from April 2011. Self Assessment against the requirements of the Scottish Local Authority Climate declaration is 35/35 at the end of 2009/10. Performance is scrutinised at Climate Change Working Group.

4.02 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. =

Council is working with primary sector partners (for example: Highland Birchwoods, FCS, Inshore Fisheries Groups and the Scottish Government) to help ensure the continued importance of the farming, forestry and fishing sectors in the Highlands. In addition to projects supported in these fields the Council addresses all strategic consultations and is a member of the High Regional Projects Assessment Committee which is responsible for approval of rural priorities projects arising from the Scottish Rural Development Programme. The Council is also a member of the local Inshore Fisheries Advisory Groups established in the Highlands. Although the availability of project funds is limited compared to recent years the Council has been able to support projects designed to:

- Promote local food and local food networks via its agree Local Food Strategy
- Add value to agricultural products in the Highlands via SOIL Association and SRDP
- Develop infrastructure in west coast harbours and fishing dependent communities where diversification is importance (SailWEST)
- Re-establish healthy fish stocks around the Moray Firth, which support coastal tourism

Performance indicators are being reviewed for this commitment.

4.03 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 930.37MW in 2009/10. Crown Estates issued leases for the Pentland Firth in January 2010.

- 4.04 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 2009/10 a further 9 communities were assisted bringing the total number to 45 from a baseline of 24 in 2007/8. The Council through its Community Benefit Working Group is currently reviewing its policy and guidance in respect of community benefit from renewable energy developments. The Council is focussing on On-Shore and Off-Shore developments with a view to securing greater levels of benefit for Highland.
- 4.05 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.** ✓
- Legislation came into force in August 2009. Guidance on sustainable design is being reworked to reflect updated standards and new approaches to development. The Housing Expo successfully raised the profile of sustainable design exceeding visitor targets. The Council's pre-application advice service to the development industry is seen as best practice. A baseline for monitoring major new developments are accompanied by a sustainable design statement has been established at 75% for 2009/10 against a target of 100% by 2010/11.
- 4.06 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.** ✓
- This objective has been achieved.
- 4.07 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** ✓
C
- Good progress is being made in the three indicators for this commitment as follows, since the baseline in 2004-5 there has been:
- 19% reduction in energy use
 - 15.7% reduction in CO₂ emissions
 - £1.8m of energy costs avoided since 2005
- This was reported to Resources Committee in August 2010.
- In 2009-10 more stretching targets were introduced and approved in the new Carbon Management Plan. This re-set the base-line to 2007/8 and sets targets to 2011/12. Targets are also set for reducing carbon emissions from business travel, fleet, internal waste, street lighting and water consumption.
- 4.08 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 4659kW in 2009/10 from a baseline of 1225kW in 2006/7. Progress on installing renewables in council houses has been slower than anticipated. During 2009/10 a further 8 houses had renewables installed, this is against 57 in 2008/9 and an annual target of 200. There were two factors influencing performance, firstly a number of technical issues with air source heat pumps installed during 2007/2008 and further work was needed to increase our confidence in the technology. Secondly, there was slippage in the overall HRA capital programme for heating work during 2009/10. The Housing and Social Work Committee agreed a new policy on heating options appraisal during 2009/10, including the use of renewable technology. It should be noted that the issues causing delays in installing renewable technology have been addressed and that there are 338 installations planned for 2010/2011.

- 4.09 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 the construction of Phases I and II underway, and the next phase about to be put out to tender.

- 4.10 We will allocate resources appropriately between winter maintenance to drainage and watercourse maintenance, as well as local small scale flood prevention schemes, in recognition of the effects of climate change, with a minimum of 10 small scale flood prevention schemes completed each year.** ✓

Funding allocated in Revenue Budget for these works.

- 4.11 We will prepare a green travel plan for the Council 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.** C ✓

There are green travel plans in place for 10 Council sites, work on this commitment has been completed with guidance available on-line for internal and external use.

- 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.** ✓

The TECS Committee has agreed the Joint Waste Management Strategy with Moray Council. The first element of the Waste Strategy is currently being considered in detail and Consultants have reported on the viability and estimated costs for a small energy from waste plant based in Skye. However, as a result of the uncertainty around the implementation of Scotland's Zero Waste Plan, the Skye waste to energy project has been put on hold until the Scottish Government provides clarity on the potential restrictions on materials allowed in energy from waste plants, and the requirements to pre-treat waste.

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 2009/10 the amount of residual waste disposed to landfill out-with Highland reduced by 4,624 tonnes compared with 2008/09.

- 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 34.50% in 2009/10
- 4.14 We will limit the amount of biodegradable waste going to landfill.** ✓
 The amount of municipal waste collected that is land filled continues to reduce from a baseline of 73.9% in 2006/7 to 65% in 2009/10.
- 4.15 We will reduce paper use in our offices and recycle 50% by the end of 2009.** M
 New policies for waste minimisation and recycling paper in Council offices were approved in September 2009. Key actions for implementing these policies included staff communication and the provision of recycling facilities among the top 40 consuming buildings. These facilities are in use; however recycled paper waste is not yet quantifiable. Proxy indicators and processes are under review through the Climate Change Working Group to improve performance reporting in 2010-11. A full year of performance data is not available since the policy was implemented. For the period 2009-10, including the 6 months of the new policies the volume of paper purchased by the Council from its main supplier has increased by 2.5% (101656 reams in 2008/9 to 104176 in 2009/10).
- 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 good progress as follows:
 - The Cleanliness Index (sample of streets and land) has improved from 71% in 2006/7 to 78% in 2009/10 a 2% improvement from 2008/9.
 - From a 2008/9 baseline of 23 for the number of fixed penalty notices for dog fouling and littering, there were 53 notices issued in 2009/10.
 - A baseline of 21 for 2008/9 established for the number of promotional events on litter picking this has significantly increased to 241 in 2009/10.
- 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 is awaiting Scottish Government approval. In order to monitor participation levels people counters are being installed on paths as part of a LEADER project.
- 4.18 We will develop a policy for supporting allotments where there is demand.** ✓
 Good progress is being made with an Allotments Policy approved in December 2009. Open space has been adopted by the Planning, Environment and Development Committee. Monitoring of the number of allotments established commenced in 2009/10 with three new sites (Nairn, Alness and Bught).
- 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.

There is a new Highland Biodiversity Action Plan with seven groups running under a capacity building project. The data on the number of participants on ranger guided walks has been reviewed and corrected to an improving trend over the past three years. During 2009/10 the number increased to 12512 compared with a 2007/8 baseline of 11,256. Further work is being undertaken on developing qualitative measure of participant's experiences of participation. The number of people engaged in biodiversity projects has been maintained giving a 3 year cumulative total of 24 in 2009/10. In addition 6 new projects have received support from the Council's Landfill Communities Fund. The percentage of planning applications where biodiversity check-lists are completed has not progressed as significantly as expected. A training programme is now being developed for implementation as biodiversity project work comes to a close. Check list use will increase during the remainder of 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 the Scottish Government and SEPA to introduce the requirements set out the Flood Risk (Scotland) Act 2009 and continue to progress Flood Prevention Orders for areas where there is a history of flooding affecting residential properties.** ✓
 A new Flood Act is now in place with streamlined procedures. Flood Act Regulations under development. Flood Orders are in place for River Ness downstream of Ness Bridge.
- 4.23 **Highland Council will work for a review of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with a view to improving the legislation.** ✓
 Progress is being monitored through a short life working group and through the Convention of the Highlands and Islands.
- 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.

Liaison with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar established to monitor and review the control of shipping in the Minch.

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

- 5.01 **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.** ✓

The Council received a report from the Accounts Commission in relation to BV2 in May 2010 this was reported to Council in June 2010. The report was very positive of the Council's performance in demonstrating best value and community planning. Areas of strength, good practice and advanced practice are reported. The Council was judged to be improving well in the direction and pace of change and to be well placed to deliver future improvement. The shared risk assessment from 5 external scrutiny bodies showed no areas of significant risk for the Council. From a baseline in 2006/7 of 80% the Council has sustained satisfaction levels with Council services at 83% in 2008/9. Against an efficiency target of £8M in 2009/10 £8.262M has been achieved. The Corporate Improvement Programme is progressing well with 9 projects at 'green' status. 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 2009/10 annual accounts. A wide public consultation was conducted from March to June 2010 to gauge public views on budget savings ideas. The results will be used in the budget setting process. Self evaluation through the Public Services Improvement Framework is being piloted with a programme for roll out across all services being developed. A Corporate Self Assessment was completed and used to support BV2.

- 5.02 **We commit the Council to the principle of appropriate additional decentralisation of political decision-making within the Council.** ✓

Access to decision making through web casting and improved video conferencing facilities has been put in place. The budget consultation has effectively engaged the public through on-line discussion forums, Ward Forum meetings and the establishment of a Citizens Panel in Highland. The Citizens Panel's first task was to respond to the Council's Annual Public Performance Survey including budget consultation questions.

- 5.03 **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 three indicators against this commitment making mixed progress. As outlined in 5.1 above a positive BV2 report was received. Response times within target for complaints and enquiries handling have improved to 60% in 2009/10 compared to 58% in 2008/9 and against a baseline of 71% in 2006/7. Compliance with the required response times for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests has declined to 82% (928 requests) in 2009/10 against a 2006/7 baseline of 88% (505 requests). This therefore is in the context of significantly increasing levels of FOI requests.

5.04 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. ✓

The council’s progress towards meeting the current public sector equality duties are reported to committee on a 6 monthly cycle. Screening and impact assessments tools are in place. There was an increased in activities screened to 108 in 2009/10 compared to 103 the previous year. The number of women manager in the top 2% of earners within the Council has increased from 27.6% in 2006/7 to 35.5% in 2009/10. Significant improvement has been made for the top 5% earners where women represent 47.3% in 2009/10 (38.8% in 2008/9) compared with 35.9% in 2006/7. A single equalities scheme is drafted for consultation, with implementation planned from April 2011. Significant partnership activities during 2009/2010 include:

- The setting up and launch of a hate incident reporting campaign in support of our aims to promote equality and address discrimination and harassment. This campaign involves a range of local equality groups in its development and as third party reporting organisations.
- An event for disabled employees and line managers to raise awareness of disability in the workplace and investigate interest in establishing a disabled employee’s network.
- Over the year, we have looked at engagement and consultation arrangements with equalities groups, this has included taking account of representation of equalities groups in the creation of a citizen’s panel and making alternative arrangements, such as focus groups, for views to be heard where appropriate. Work will continue to ensure there are no barriers to involvement in decision making and consultation by equalities groups.

5.05 We will make Council decision-making more accessible by web casting Council meetings and by other means. ✓

Following a pilot in 2009 it was agreed to extend web casting to all strategic committees.

5.06 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 2009/10, 88% was achieved. The number of internal and external services dealt with at first point of contact within the customer services network has improved from a 2006/7 baseline of 52% to 55% in 2009/10. Opening hours have been reviewed and have improved from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday to 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to noon on

Saturdays. An ICT Strategy was agreed which will introduce further improvements in the technology available to support better customer access. A Web Strategy has also been agreed and will deliver improvements to the Council's website; improve access to services via the web and support the delivery of the Information Management Strategy.

- 5.07 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.** ✓

Work has been completed on a Ward Forum best practice guide for Ward Manager and this is being posted on the web for general use. Monitoring of participation at Ward Forums has been reviewed and a new monitoring template is place for 2010/11. All Ward Forums are engaging partners to improve joint working and consider shared services. The recent Best Value audit of the Council reflected very positively on the work of Ward Forum in engaging communities.

- 5.08 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.** ✓

The Council recognises the need for significant rationalisation of its asset base and has made good progress in declaring assets surplus although disposals are challenging in the current market. The three indicators under this commitment are making good progress or being sustained in 2009/10 with 58.1% (59.7% in 2006/7) of buildings suitable for current use, 56% (baseline 54% in 2007/8) of operational accommodation in a satisfactory condition and 87.1% of public caller building accessible to people with disabilities against a baseline of 61.3% in 2006/7.

- 5.09 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 increased from an average number of working days per employee of 10.6 days in 2008/9 to 11.6 days in 2009/10. Teacher's sickness absence has also increased for an average of 6.2 days in 2008/9 to 7.3 days in 2009/10. This is a new method of calculation for the statutory performance indicator with limited trend evidence. In relation to 'Revitalising Health and Safety Targets the number of Working days lost as a result of accidents has reduced in 2009/10 to 990 compared to 1330 in 2006/7 (1136 in 2008/9). Action is being taken to target areas of poor performance and to provide management support to reduce absence levels, this will include procuring a new and improved Occupational Health Service in collaboration with Northern Constabulary and Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service. The % of Council staff saying they have a personal development plan (PDP) which was baselined at 45% in 2007/8 from the staff survey. During 2009/10 this increased to 59%. The number of employees who consider the Council to be above average or one of the best employers was 31% compared to 26% in 2007/8.

- 5.10 We will work with the trades unions to deliver modernised working** ✓

conditions and a single status workforce by 2010.

A new pay and grading structure was implemented in February 2009 appeals processes are underway during 2010/11. A set of modernised working terms and conditions was introduced on 1st September 2010 following extensive consultation and a collective agreement being reached with the trade unions.

5.11 We will agree an annual training and development programme for elected members and introduce role descriptions and performance development plans for councillors.



Role descriptions are in place for Elected Members with a review due to go to Council in October 2010. This will seek approval for the continuation of agreed Role Descriptions from 2009 and for 3 new Role Descriptions to be added. Training programme for 2010-2011 has been agreed and 53 Elected Members PDPs completed. The remaining 27 PDPs should be completed by December 2010.

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 internal use and these are published on the Intranet.