Highland Choices: Your Voice - Your Council - Your Future

Roghainnean Gàidhealach: Ur Guth - Ur Comhairle - Ur n-Àm ri Teachd

Tell us what you think

The Highland Council has a gross budget of £616.2m. We use this to carry out hundreds of functions and provide many essential services across a region covering a third of Scotland.   
(For further details please see the Highland Choices booklet at: [www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice](http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice))

We are looking forward as an organisation and seeking the views and opinions of communities across Highland about what is important to you. We want to know what you believe we should be focusing on, what is working well within your community and what is not working so well.

We anticipate that our budget will reduce over the next 3 years and that we will have less to spend. Our options are to reduce our costs or to increase our income or a mixture of both. This will still leave us with a significant budget and we aim to spend the money that we do have responsibly and effectively to achieve the best outcomes and the best value for money.

We want your help to tell us what is important to you and where you believe changes could be made. Your views will help us shape what we do over the next three years.

**How to respond?**

You can provide your views in a number of ways:

* You can complete the survey online at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YourvoiceYourCouncil](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/YourvoiceYourCouncil)
* You can complete the survey contained in this document and email it to: [yourvoice@highland.gov.uk](mailto:yourvoice@highland.gov.uk)
* You can post any completed surveys to Policy Team, Chief Executive’s Office, Highland Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX
* You can email any additional comments you have to: [yourvoice@highland.gov.uk](mailto:yourvoice@highland.gov.uk)

There are also a number of other ways that you provide views:

* There will be a series of Facebook conversations on specific topics. Details of these are provided on the website at: [www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice](http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice)
* You can complete the Council’s budget challenge - this is an online tool which gives the residents of Highland the opportunity to consider where budget should be spent, the ultimate aim being to balance the Council’s budget [www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice](http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourvoice)

**What are your priorities?**

We provide services across the Highland area for different communities and for different groups. We also need to balance the needs of different communities and provide services to those who need them most. To help us understand where we should focus, we want to hear what the priorities are for you, your family and your community.

1. What Council services are most important for you and your family?

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1. What is important for your wider community?

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1. If possible, where would you like the Council to invest in services?

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**The Council’s Role**

1. How important is the Council’s role in:

Please rate each area between 1 and 5 where 1 is the highest importance and 5 is of lower importance.

**Our community**

* Caring for vulnerable adults **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Caring for vulnerable children **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Improving education outcomes for all **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Championing equality **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Early learning and childcare **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Involving communities in local decisions **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

**Our environment**

* Protecting the environment –   
  street cleaning, refuse collection, recycling **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Building homes across Highland **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Maintaining greenspace –   
  grass cutting, playparks and planting **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Leisure, sporting and cultural services **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Maintaining roads and infrastructure **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

**Our economy**

* Economic development –   
  supporting business and development **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Promoting the Highlands as a place to visit **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Developing tourism infrastructure **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

**Our staff**

* Investing in training and development for our workforce **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**
* Attracting people to live and work in Highland **1** **2** **3** **4** **5**

**Being More Efficient**

As the budget has reduced in the last few years, we have focused on trying to change how we do things to be more efficient. This has changed how we provide some services and we have found new ways of doing things. There are always ways to improve what we do and we want to hear your thoughts.

Thinking about the services the Council provides:

1. What is working well?

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1. What could be done better?

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1. What specific services or functions do you think could be provided differently at a lower cost and how?

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1. Over the last few years, we have been working hard on being more efficient. However, we recognise that we can do more. What are your ideas on where we could be more efficient?

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1. Are there things that we should stop doing and if so what might these be?

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**Increasing Income**

As the overall budget reduces, one approach is to increase the amount of income we bring in. This avoids the need to reduce or stop providing certain services.

1. Council Tax currently makes up about 19% of the Council’s overall budget. At the moment Councils are not able to increase Council Tax by more than 3%. If this restriction was removed, would you be prepared to pay more Council Tax and how much?

* 3%
* 5%
* 7%
* Not prepared to pay more

1. a) If additional Council Tax was targeted at a specific area e.g. education, vulnerable children, social care, creating jobs etc. Would you be prepared to pay a higher amount of Council Tax e.g. up to 10%?

* Yes
* No
* Don’t know

b) If yes, where would you wish resources targeted?

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1. We recognise that we need to focus on becoming more efficient as an organisation but in order to balance the Council’s budget, this will also require changing how we do things.   
   In terms of priority, would you rather we:

Please rank in order of priority where 1 is your first preference.

* Increase charges **rank 1st 2nd** or **3rd** (delete as appropriate)
* Increase Council Tax **rank 1st 2nd** or **3rd** (delete as appropriate)
* Reduce services **rank 1st 2nd** or **3rd** (delete as appropriate)

1. We want to promote Highland as a great place to work and to visit. However, Councils in areas where there are a large number of tourists will have higher costs relating to waste, roads maintenance etc. This reflects the services used by people who visit our area.

To provide the infrastructure the Council needs to support tourism, it might be possible for a small charge to be applied to guests in Hotels, Guest Houses and B&Bs. This is known as a tourist levy and is common practice in some European countries. The Scottish Government is currently consulting on this but we want to know what people in Highland feel about this.

Funds raised through this approach could be used to benefit both tourists and locals.

To what extent do you agree that a tourist levy should be applied in Highland?

* Strongly agree
* Agree
* Neither agree nor disagree
* Disagree
* Strongly disagree

1. The Council generates income from a number of sources including car parking, harbour charges, burials and cremations, etc.

To what extent do you agree that we should increase charges annually in order to generate income?

* Strongly agree
* Agree
* Neither agree nor disagree
* Disagree
* Strongly disagree

1. Do you have any ideas for other ways in which the Council could generate or explore new sources of income?

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***Thank you for completing our survey***

**About you**

Please tell us about you:

1. Gender

* Male
* Female
* Prefer not to answer
* Other

1. Age

(Please tick one box only)

* 16-17
* 18-24
* 25-34
* 35-44
* 45-54
* 55-64
* 65-74
* Over 75

1. Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability (i.e. a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities)?

(Please tick one box only)

* Yes
* No

1. Families with Children

Are there school aged children in your household? (Please tick one box only)

* Yes
* No

1. Location

Which area of Highland do you live?

* Caithness
* Sutherland
* Ross and Cromarty
* Skye and Lochalsh
* Lochaber
* Inverness
* Nairn
* Badenoch and Strathspey