

Highland Council

3 September 2015

Corporate Performance Report 2014-15

Report by the Chief Executive

Agenda Item	
Report No	

Summary

This report provides an assessment of Council performance against the Corporate Plan and the Council's Programme. It covers the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015. Good progress is reported with 94% of the commitments (130 out of the total 139) being either completed, on target or where performance is being maintained. For 8 commitments (6%) there is mixed performance and there is one commitment that has not been met.

1. Background

- 1.1 An annual report of Corporate Performance is prepared each autumn, covering performance for the previous financial year. The report is based on performance against the Council's commitments and corporate performance indicators which are set out in the Performance Framework for the Council Programme 2012-17 approved by Council in October 2012. In addition the Corporate Plan which reflects both the programme and the performance framework was approved by Council in May 2013. A further 10 commitments were added to the Programme in December 2013 and an updated Performance Framework agreed in May 2014 and May 2015.
- 1.2 The principles that underpin the Council's values include that we will be fair, open and accountable. This means we will measure our performance, report on it publicly and listen to our communities, to ensure we are delivering services that provide best value for Council Taxpayers.' This annual performance report contributes to achieving the Council's values, particularly those of being open and listening. This report is also scrutinised by Audit Scotland.

2. Council Performance April 2014 to end March 2015

- 2.1 In total there are 139 commitments. Appendix 1 describes performance for each commitment. An overview by theme is provided in the table below. For ease of reference the following symbols have been used to provide an assessment of performance:

- ✓ Progressing well or on target
- = Actions have some slippage or indicators are maintaining performance
- M Mixed performance - positive and negative movements in indicators/actions, or where it is too early to judge
- ✘ Commitment not met (no significant progress)
- C Completed

Where a ✓ and a C have been used this refers to commitments completed in 2014/15.

Theme	✓ Good Progress	C Complete	= Maintained	M Mixed performance	✗ Commitment not met	Totals
1	25	2	2	3	0	32
2	23	2	4	2	0	31
3	9	3	1	1	0	14
4	15	1	9	0	0	25
5	7	0	1	0	1	9
6	12	3	4	2	0	21
7	6	1	0	0	0	7
Totals	97	12	21	8	1	139

2.2 Commitments completed, progressing well, on target or being maintained

For 2014/15 there were 130 of the 139 commitments (94%) either complete, progressing well or performance is being maintained (96% in 2013/14). Good progress is reflected across all seven themes of the programme and detailed information is provided in appendix 1 of this report. Achievements include:

- We exceeded targets to pay 60% of invoices within 10 calendar days of receipt and 90% within 30 calendar days. During 2014/15 we paid 76.9% of invoices within 10 days (73.4% in 2013/14) and 94.3% of invoices with 30 days (93.3% in 2013/14) (cp1.05)
- During 2014/15 our Business Gateway supported 424 business start-ups (250 in 2013/14) and provided 1013 businesses with advice, information or training (498 in 2013/14) (cp1.06)
- The Royal National Mod (RNM) took place in Inverness between 10 and 18 October 2014. This most successful Mod ever was an integral part of the Scottish Government's Homecoming 2014 Programme.
 - Over 3,000 competitors took part
 - Around 9,000 people attended
 - Over £3.5M was generated to the local economy (cp1.10)
- Our progress in supporting large-scale employment opportunities is monitored through the available unemployment rates in key Travel to Work Areas (TTWA). These show good progress against the Scottish average in 2014/15 of 2.5% and progress towards the Highland average of 1.43%.
 - Thurso TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 2.1% compared to 2.8% the year before.
 - Invergordon TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 2.5% compared to 2.9% the year before.
 - Inverness & Dingwall TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 1.0% compared to 1.8% the year before.
 - Skye & Lochalsh, Ullapool & Gairloch TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 1.7% compared to 2.2% the year before.
- Low levels of child protection re-registrations (12 months or less between registrations) have been sustained at 3.67% for 2014/15 compared to 5.31% the year before (cp2.01)
- The proportion of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) who are able to sustain full time education increased from 94% in 2013/14 to 99% in 2014/15. (cp2.07)
- Customer contact levels with Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) remain high with 55,419 customer contacts in 2014/15 compared to 42,415 the previous year. The financial benefit to customers from the advice given by us was £3.974m in 2014/15 compared to £1.634m the previous year. We also assisted 1330 customers with our money advice and welfare rights service. (cp3.2)
- The number of people receiving self-directed support (SDS) increased to 349 in 2014/15 compared to 262 the previous year (cp3.10)
- Phase 1(River Ness to Friars Bridge) of the River Ness Flood Alleviation

Project is now complete, Phase 2 (Friars Bridge to the Harbour) will be completed in August 2015 (cp4.8).

- We built 173 council houses in 2014/15 exceeding our target of 120. We have now built 434 houses against our target to build 688 houses by March 2017. We also delivered 34 new 1 bed units and secured a further 83 for delivery this year. We have completed 90 homes utilising a housing trust type model which provides homes at a rent which is between market rent and Council rent, with tenants having the opportunity to purchase after 5 years (cp5.1, cp5.03).
- We aim to 100% of services capable of being delivered on-line accessible by March 2017. During 2014/15 we increased to 23.9% compared to 9.4% the previous year. Our new website was successfully launched on 29 May 2014 and will contribute to achieving our overall target (cp6.5).
- We aim to achieve a minimum of 85% fulfilment of customer contact at 1st point of contact, during 2014/15 this was 89.6% compare to 87.9% the year before and above target (cp6.06)
- The gender pay gap between female and male staff is now monitored and there has been a reduction in the 'combined' pay gap which includes full-time and part-time staff of 0.7% from 2013 (9.3%) to 2015 (8.6%) (cp6.16).
- The Emergency Planning Unit has continued to encourage community councils to develop local community resilience plans in relation to a range of likely major incidents, including severe weather events. This is being done through close collaboration with Scottish & Southern Energy's (SSE) Community Liaison Team and Ward Managers. Some 50 community councils have so far attended local events designed to support communities in developing their plans. (cp7.07)

2.3 Mixed performance - positive and negative movement in indicators

There are 8 commitments where mixed performance is recorded (6%). These are summarised below, on the basis of exceptions reporting, and are cross-referenced to Appendix 1. Performance in some areas is affected by economic circumstances and constraints on funding.

- The number of growth businesses supported was 60 in 2013/14 against a target of 84 (58 in 2013/14) (cp1.06)
- We work to attract cruise liner visits to Highland ports with 86 visiting in 2014/15. A target was set to attract 130 by 2015 but this is considered unlikely to be achieved. The number of visits is reducing due to external factors including UK border control changes and a move towards larger cruise ships, some of which can't access smaller Highland ports (cp1.18).
- The proportion of our council housing stock meeting the energy efficiency standard (SHQS), in 2014/15 was 88.0% (subject to verification) against a target of 93% and compared to 75.7% the year before. This is reported on below at 2.4 in relation to the overall SHQS target (cp1.28)
- Against a target to maintain at 90% or above the grading of schools inspected as satisfactory or better by Education Scotland; for academic year 2014/15 we achieved 71.4% (compared to 84.2% in 2012/13) . There were 7 schools inspected (cp2.06)
- We aim to have fewer looked after children in out of authority placements. At the end of 2013/14, there were 46 , the same as the previous year against a target to maintain at 42 or below(cp2.09)
- Against a target to ensure 95% statutory health assessments are done within 4 weeks of becoming looked after, we achieved 70.4% at the end of 2014/15, compared to 82.8% the previous year. Although performance has improved since integration (30%) the target has never been achieved (cp2.09)
- The length of time it takes to place children with permanent carers once a decision has been made to do this. During 2014/15, the average time was 15 months, an increase from 9 months the previous year. Improvement in permanence planning is a priority for the service (cp2.09)

- To achieve fully integrated front line health and social care services for adults a first single point of access had been established in 5 local districts by 2014/15, the same as the previous year, against a target of 7. The aim is to have one in all nine districts by the end of 2015/16 (cp3.01).
- The aim is to reduce the rate of emergency inpatient bed days for people aged 75 and over per 1,000 population. The rate has increased to 4,930 per 1,000 in 2013/14 (October 2013 latest data) compared to 4,678 the previous year (cp3.01).
- There were 49 people waiting for hospital discharge beyond the two weeks target in 2014/15 compared to 9 the previous year (cp3.01).
- There were 3075 bed days lost due to delayed discharge during 2014/15 (2680 in 2013/14) against a target of 1650 (cp3.01).
- The aim is to have no-one waiting longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment for psychological therapies by December 2014. During 2014/15 72% was achieved within timescale compared to 78% the previous year (amended from 88%) (cp3.01).
- The 2007-13 LEADER Programme is closed and has not committed any grants since early 2013. There is therefore no activity to report on for 2014/15. At the end of the previous scheme there were 137 community groups actively involved in community based economic development (cp6.09).
- During 2014/15 we added 55.4% of the recommended national target for annual number of additions to the adult library lending stock per 1000 population, this compares to 69.6% the previous year. This reflects a strategic decision to invest in e-books and online resources to complement hard copy books; the investment in procuring more inter library loans for libraries throughout the highlands and the national decline in public demand for non-fiction titles (cp6.15).
- While there has been a further decrease in the number of borrowers (active library members) as a % of the resident population, which in 2014/15 was 16.6% compared to 17.6% the previous year. The focus for libraries (which is consistent with the new national libraries strategy) is to increase use and there are a growing number of people who use libraries without being members (cp6.15).
- We aim to resolve 80% of all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. During 2014/15 we achieved 48.4% compared to 53.1% the previous year. We aim to resolve 80% of all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. During 2014/15 we achieved 65.8% compared to 66.1% the previous year. A cross-Service review has taken place and an action plan is in place to drive improvement (cp6.19).

2.4 Commitments not met

There was 1 commitments not met:

For 2014/15 the proportion of our housing which met the standard was 85.2% compared to 70.1% the previous against a target of 100%. An additional number of properties have now been categorised as exempt on the basis of cost / technical difficulty. As reported previously there have been particular challenges involved in installing new renewable heating technology in off gas areas. We discuss options with tenants who wish to opt out of works and intend to carry these out at future changes of tenancy. We are now expecting completion of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard programme in January 2016 (cp5.02).

2.5 Overall satisfaction with Council Services

It should also be noted that overall satisfaction with Council services during 2014/15 remains high at 83% reported by our Citizen's Panel.

3. **Review of the Council Programme**

- 3.1 The new Council Programme, Highland First was approved on 13th August 2015 and subject to agreed amendments being finalised the corporate performance framework

will be reviewed and submitted to Council for approval. As part of this process it has also been agreed to continue to monitor the progress of the previous programme. There are a number of commitments that have been completed, have processes in place or are covered by Highland First. For clarity a summary of the previous programme showing what is covered by Highland First and the commitments which will continue to be monitored is provided as appendix 2 of this report.

4 Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15

4.1 We are no longer required to make an annual return of Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) to Audit Scotland and the deadline to publish the results by 30th September each year has been removed. This change in direction has also taken place alongside the development of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) and the indicators within this framework have been adopted as SPIs by Audit Scotland. Subject to the publication of LGBF data for 2014/15 we will report on SPIs to Council in December 2015.

5. Implications

- 5.1 Resources: There are no financial implications as a result of this performance report. However the progress outlined above should be noted in the context of the current financial climate. With an overall 83% satisfaction rating for 2014/15 reflecting positively on maintaining service delivery.
- 5.2 Legal: Implications relate to meeting statutory requirements for public performance reporting.
- 5.3 Equalities and Climate Change/Carbon Clever: This report identifies the progress made with the Council's cross-cutting and specific commitments on equalities and climate change.
- 5.4 Risk: Audit Scotland produces an annual Assurance and Improvement Plan for the Council which assesses, with other scrutiny bodies, the risk of non-achievement of Council commitments. As reported to Council there are no significant scrutiny risks identified and this report highlights that good progress is being made with the Council's Programme.
- 5.5 Rural: The delivery of our commitments is supportive of the Councils' rural objectives. These include reviewing our approaches to service delivery and community resilience in our most remote and rural communities, community benefit from renewables, tackling fuel poverty and campaigning for fair fuel prices.

6. Recommendations

6.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the good progress being made with delivery of the Council's Programme for the period 01 April 2014 to end 31 March 2015.
- Await a further report on SPIs and the Local Government Benchmarking Framework in December 2015.
- Note the approach to the previous programme outlined at 3.1 and in appendix 2.

Signature:

Designation: Chief Executive

Author: Evelyn Johnston, Corporate Performance Manager

Date: 24.08.15

Appendix 1 - Annual Performance Report 2014/15

Appendix 2 – Working together for the Highlands, commitments no longer being monitored

The following three commitments are reflected across the themes of the Council Programme and Corporate Plan

- a) **The Council commits to the principle of equal respect for the Gaelic and English languages, whilst also recognising the diversity of indigenous language and dialects within the Highland area.**

Our Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 2012-16 received statutory approval from Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 18 September 2012 and its implementation is overseen by the Gaelic Implementation Group. The Chief Executive submitted our Annual GLP Implementation Report to Bòrd na Gàidhlig on 27 April 2015; and is scheduled to meet Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Chief Executive on 22 June 2015.

Our Annual Implementation Report covered the period February 2014 to 31 January 2015 and this comprehensive overview of GLP implementation contained a raft of achievements over the year. Our Gaelic Medium Primary 1 intake continued to rise and we are on track to open a new Gaelic Primary School in August 2015 in Ft William; with another scheduled for completion in 2017, in Portree. We hosted the Royal National Mod in October 2014 and this injected some £3.57 million into the local economy. We also hosted the Scots Traditional Music awards in December 2014. This event generated significant media coverage including a live TV broadcast and also generated more spend in the City in a usually quiet period for tourism. It also highlighted the results of a ground-breaking multi-agency research project which assessed that the potential economic and social benefits of Gaelic as an asset to the Scottish economy could be in the region of between £82m and £149m per annum.

As we work to prepare our third GLP in 2016, we seek to ensure that the interests of Gaelic are taken into consideration in the Community Planning Partnership locally and the wider levels of Government beyond. Our annual attitudes and performance survey tell us that 76% of people feel we have strengthened the profile of the Gaelic language to a great or some extent. Further key performance indicators are also reported at 1.10, 1.21, 2.15, 2.18, 2.22, 2.26, 2.30 and 2.31 below.

- b) **The Council will maintain its commitment to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration.**

We have been a signatory of Scotland's Climate Change Declaration since 2007, voluntarily committing to producing an annual report on regional progress to mitigate against, and adapt to, climate change. The Scottish Government is currently considering changes to the Public Bodies Duties set out in the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, which would replace the current system of voluntary reporting to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration with mandatory reporting. The Climate Change team submitted a response to the public consultation on the proposed Order, which will go before the Scottish Parliament in November 2015. It is likely that this Order will be approved, which would make 2014/15 the final year of reporting to Scotland's Climate Change Declaration. The 2014/15 report is required by 31st October 2015.

Performance of the Carbon Management Plan for 2014/15 will be presented at a meeting of the Resources Committee in November 2015. Data analysed so far indicates continued progress in reducing carbon emission from staff travel.

As part of working with everyone to achieve a Carbon Clever Highlands, the Highland Council led Carbon CLEVER initiative was launched in November 2013

and this has been adopted by Community Planning Partners through the Single Outcome Agreement. Sixty-five businesses and organisations have also pledged to help deliver a low carbon Highlands through the Carbon CLEVER Declaration.

Carbon CLEVER has a capital budget allowance of £1 million p.a. and in 2014/15 this was used to fund a wide range of projects to reduce carbon emissions, such as: Cycling infrastructure; LED street lighting; active travel measures and the UHI Low Carbon Institute. Other projects delivered through Carbon CLEVER in 2014/15 include the Carbon CLEVER Cycles e-bike hire scheme, sponsoring the Energy Saving Expo in Inverness; establishing the £200,000 Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund; and working with partners to secure almost £3 million for low carbon projects across the Highlands and Islands through the Local Energy Challenge Fund.

Further key performance indicators are reported on carbon reduction at 4.13 below and for climate change at 4.4, 4.15, 4.17, and 7.7 below.

c) The Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan including the general and specific duties of the Equality Act (2010), ensuring that people are treated fairly and with respect.

We continue to work towards achieving the aims of the Fairer Highland Plan 2012-17 to ensure that people in Highland are treated fairly and with dignity and respect. The plan sets out our approach to mainstreaming equality and to developing equality outcomes and associated actions. We support and work with our partners and community groups on activities that promote equality and diversity.

Improvement Actions

We have established governance to reflect its commitment to equality of opportunity, and to meeting the public sector equality duties placed on it by the Equality Act 2010. This includes:

- Quarterly reporting on equality related activities to the Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee.
- A cross-service equality group monitors and reports on equality issues. A new departmental Care and Learning equality group has taken forward activities in Education specifically and more widely across the service.
- Awareness of equality is carried out through a range of training and briefings, anti-stigma activities, committee reports, information on the Council website, press releases and social media.

Key activities during 2014/15 include:

- Engagement with groups interested in equality and people who share protected characteristics was undertaken, for example meetings between groups and Council Members.
- All Members will undergo refresher training by end of 2015.
- Progress reports were published in March 2015 on our agreed Equality Outcomes, Equality Mainstreaming and Gender Pay Gap in compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012
- In Education we have introduced new a Promoting Equality and Diversity policy and toolkit; and a new Personal relationships and bullying prevention policy, guidance and toolkit.
- Our new website has been successfully awarded the Accessible AA (government recommended compliance level) accreditation for website accessibility by the Digital Accessibility Centre (DAC).
- Our annual attitudes and performance survey continues to gather information on attitudes to equality and diversity in Highland.
- Savings proposals assessed for equality impact and associated consultation included focus groups with equality groups.

- We continue to manage and monitor language interpretation services.
- New Communication Support arrangements for Deaf people to access Council Services were implemented.

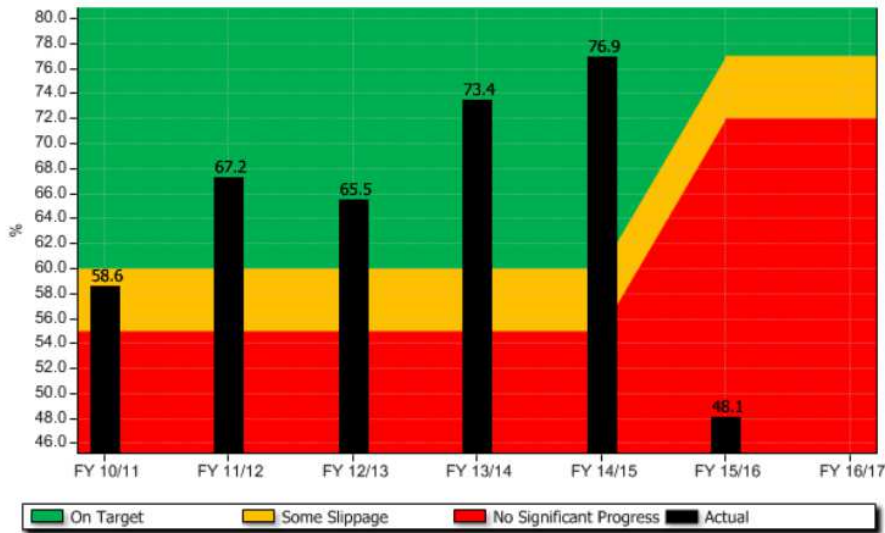
Key performance indicators are reported in 16.6 below, and there are related indicators at: 1.2, 1.21, 2.7, 2.16, 3.3, 3.9, 3.11, 6.2 and 6.14.

1. Working together for the economy

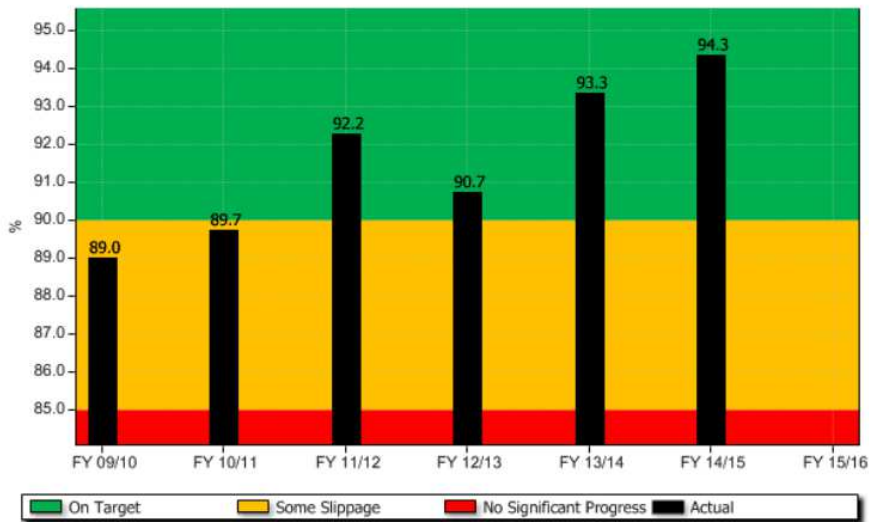
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- 1.1 Working with partners and through the Single Outcome Agreement we will implement a comprehensive economic recovery and development plan.** ✓
- Progress reporting to Highland Community Planning Partnership and the Highland Economic Forum on SOA delivery. During 2014/15 work underway to refresh the Recovery and Development Plan in light of changing economic conditions and the emergence of skill workforce issues as identified in the Highlands and Islands Skills Investment Plan.
- 1.2 The Council will introduced a living wage of at least £7.45 per hour for all council staff by April 1st, 2013, helping the lowest paid.** C
- This was achieved in 2012/13 and continues to benefit around 800 staff.
- 1.3 The Council will prioritise and protect frontline staff, to maintain standards of service delivery and provide stability to the Highland economy. We will do all we can to avoid compulsory redundancies.** ✓
- We have a good record of redeploying staff by applying stringent vacancy management processes which, together with the targeted use of voluntary severance and early retirement, avoids compulsory redundancies wherever possible. We report annually each autumn on retirements and the 2014/15 report states that there were 167 retirements of which 57 were on grounds of ill-health, flexible retirement, redundancy or efficiency.
- 1.4 The Council will prioritise and support the creation of quality jobs in the Highlands. We will encourage local enterprise initiatives, invest locally, and support key industries.** ✓
- Through Business Gateway during 2014/15 the number of clients supported in the renewables sector was 19 compared to 29 the previous year (baseline 7 in 2012/13). We also supported 6 clients in the life sciences sector compared to 5 the previous year. Information on the delivery of the Economic Recovery and Development Strategy detailed in 1.1 above is also relevant to this commitment.
- 1.5 The Council will continue to be transparent in awarding contracts, and fair and efficient in settling our bills.** ✓
- We have made progress for this commitment:
- We exceeded targets to pay 60% of invoices within 10 calendar days of receipt and 90% within 30 calendar days. During 2014/15 we paid 76.9% of invoices within 10 days (73.4% in 2013/14) and 94.3% of invoices with 30 days (93.3% in 2013/14). The overall trends since 2009/10 are provided in graphs below:

Invoices Payment <10 days

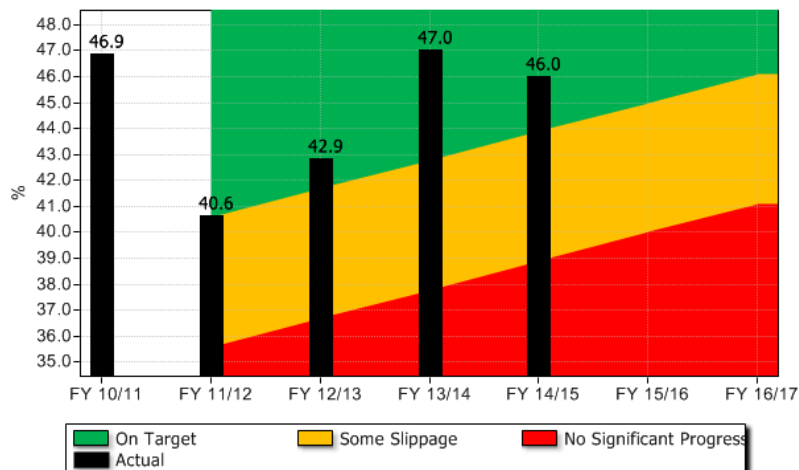


Invoices Payment within 30 days Corp8



- Against a target to increase our spending with Highland businesses by 5% by 2017, total direct spend with Highland businesses decreased by 1% in 2014/15 but maintained the level of direct spending with Highland Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The amount we spent with Highland businesses during 2014/15 for amounts of £1000 or more totalled £116m with £85m with SMEs in Highland. While the transfer of care services budgets has reduced overall Council commercial spending, however, from the 2011/12 baseline of £40.6m overall spend we have achieved a 5% increase in spend ahead of target as outlined the graph below.

Total direct spend with Highland businesses to increase by 5% by 2017 [12/13]



1.6 The Council will support small businesses and Highland entrepreneurs with advice and finance through Highland Opportunities Ltd and Business Gateway.

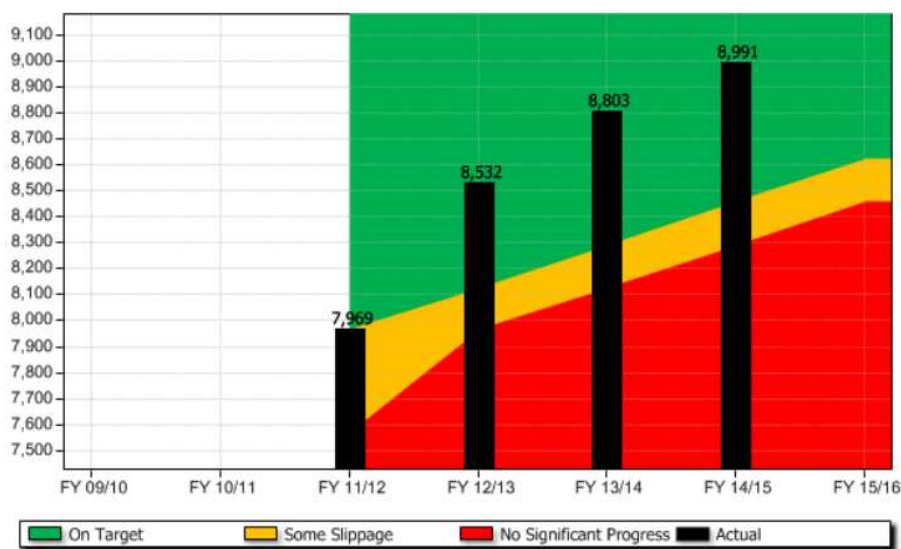
During 2014/15 our Business Gateway supported 424 business start-ups (250 in 2013/14) and provided 1013 businesses with advice, information or training (498 in 2013/14). The number of growth businesses supported was 60 in 2013/14 against a target of 84 (58 in 2013/14). Get SET for Growth: Women in Business programme has been specifically designed to help women grow their businesses by providing business support from people who understand the challenges not just of business in general, but for women in business in particular. 10 businesses attended and of those 7 business growth action plans have been completed. The Leadership and Growth programme is a business & personal development programme open to small and medium sized businesses with aspirations to grow. This programme was specifically designed to help businesses create a Business Growth & Personal Development Plan, allowing them to develop the skills, resources & techniques required to grow their business and implement their plan. Open to business owners and senior managers 16 businesses attended this programme and of these, 9 are currently working on business growth plans which are progressing effectively. 4 of the attendees were senior managers in businesses with growth aspirations.

1.7 Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will continue to support and promote the Small Business Bonus Scheme.



The number of businesses supported during 2014/15 was 8991 compared to 8803 the previous year. This maintains our consistent position at the top of the SBBS national league table.

NDR- Maintain the no. businesses in receipt of Small Business Bonus Scheme



1.8 The Council will work with partners to produce a social enterprise strategy for the Highlands.



Following an internal workshop, public consultation and targeted discussions with individual and representative social enterprise groups and partners, the preparation of a social enterprise strategy for Council consideration was delayed due to other competing work priorities. The intention is that this work will be completed during 2015/16.

1.9 The Council will promote and support local food production and continue our support for Fairtrade.



We continue to renew our application for Fairtrade Zone Status for the Highlands of Scotland with the last award in October 2013. Our next renewal application will

be submitted in October 2015. Consultation on a potential local food network indicated significant support for a virtual network using social media which producers and buyers could use to share information. As a result a virtual food network has been established and the final outcome of the work on this topic will be reported to the PDI Committee on 19th August 2015.

1.10 Working with the Scottish Government, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and private sector partners, the Council will maximise the tourism potential of the Highland area. The Council will review how the Council's cash support for tourism is allocated, working with partners to ensure appropriate and effective support is offered to promote our unique Highland identities, traditional sports and culture (including shinty, curling and our Highland games), and varied communities. Opportunities in destination-tourism, green tourism, and the Gaelic language will continue to be explored.

√

- A new research contract for national and regional tourism statistics was tendered by VisitScotland and Scottish local authorities. Developing an improved methodology has delayed reports but new, more detailed reports on growth in Highland tourism are due in mid-2015.
- A VisitScotland Agreement was approved by committee in February 2013 with dedicated Highland marketing activity undertaken by VisitScotland under the Agreement again enhanced by additional match funding from European Rural Development Fund (ERDF).
- We assisted the development of a Tourism focussed Business Improvement District which was formed on 1 April 2014 covering the Inverness and Loch Ness area. We also support five similar destination development groups which operate on a voluntary membership basis in other areas of the Highlands.
- The Royal National Mod (RNM) took place in Inverness between 10 and 18 October 2014. This most successful Mod ever was an integral part of the Scottish Government's Homecoming 2014 Programme.
 - Over 3,000 competitors took part
 - Around 9,000 people attended
 - Over £3.5M was generated to the local economy
- We provided funding support and participated in a ground-breaking multi-agency research project assessing the '*Economic and Social Benefits of Gaelic as an Asset*'. This was published in November 2014 and highlighted that Gaelic is used by more than 60% of the businesses/social enterprises respondents, as a key element of their main activities, products or services. The potential economic value of Gaelic as an asset to the Scottish economy could be in the region of between £82M and £149M
- In partnership with Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG), we continued to fund Cuach na Cloinne, the national Gaelic primary schools football competition. We are now in discussion with the Camanachd Association to organise a pilot shinty event within Highland.
- We were also successful in once again attracting the Scottish Traditional Music Awards (Trads) to Highland in December 2014. The Trads 2014 in Inverness were the biggest and most ambitious to date and generated substantial media coverage across Scotland.
- We hosted the 36th Celtic Media Festival (CMF) in Inverness from 22–24 April 2015. The Bronze Torc Awards for Excellence attracted a record breaking 500 entries. Our Tourism and Film Officers had a stand at the CMF Showcase, distributing '*Movie Locations to Visit in the Highlands*'. This leaflet promotes the Highlands to visitors by encouraging them to visit locations as many movies have featured areas in the Highlands.

1.11 The Council will work with the Cairngorms National Park Authority to support them to develop the valuable role they play in the wider Highland environment and economy.

✓

- We continue to work with and part funded the Cairngorms Business Partnership – the main business grouping in the National Park and plays an active role in the Cairngorms Economic Forum. This included supporting the development of a Cairngorms Economic Strategy.
- A new research contract for national and regional tourism statistics was tendered by VisitScotland and Scottish local authorities. Developing an improved methodology has delayed reports but reports due in mid-2015 will include reports for Scotland's National Parks and will be used to measure growth in tourism in the Cairngorms National Park.

1.12 The Council will work with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Scottish Development International and statutory infrastructure providers to promote and develop the Highland area as one of the most attractive environments to do business in Scotland.

✓

- The proportion of non-householder planning applications that were dealt with within two months increased in 2014/15 to 63.3% compared to 62.1% the previous year achieving the target set out in our submission to Scottish Government of 62%.
- Delivery of the 2014/15 Vacant and Derelict Land Fund (VDLF) was undertaken requiring reserve projects to be progressed and associated permission secured from Scottish Government to carry over spend into 2015/16.
- The number of hectares of vacant and derelict land remediated including sites accessed for future use in 2014/15 was 19.2 hectares compared to 12.98 hectares in 2013/14.
- A further 13 environmental projects were completed during 2014/15 taking the total to 42 since 2012/13. Development work is currently ongoing in relation to around 30 further projects for delivery over the next two years.
- We continue to participate in a wide range of inward investment activities alongside our partners in Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE), Scottish Development International (SDI), and the Scottish Cities Alliance. As well as promoting the area at a series of inward investment focussed events we have developed an inward investment related website, www.enterprisinghighland.com to accompany more traditional promotional materials. These tools will promote the area to potential inward investors and developers, emphasising the strengths of the Highland economy and related elements such as educational opportunities, the existence of a skilled workforce and the developing communications infrastructure to ensure the continued economic development of the region.

1.13 The Council will review Council procedures, including procurement, to ensure that contracts are drawn up so as to maximise the opportunities for local business.

✓

In addition to the targets to increase by 5% the total direct spend with Highland businesses and SMEs outlined in 1.5 above, the engagement of community groups to deliver services alongside the business and third sectors is also being pursued and our contracts register is being examined in respect of contracts ending in FY 16/17 to determine where this may be a realistic possibility.

1.14 Working with the Scottish and UK Governments, the Council will investigate means whereby resources currently held by pension funds can be invested for the overall benefit of the people of the Highlands.

✓

Achieved in 2012/13. We continue to monitor developments but must protect the interests of the Pension Fund and ensure that return on investment at least equals

that of the current market. At present there are cheaper funding options for borrowers than could be offered by the fund. We are investigating a scheme currently being used by another Scottish Council. However funds of these types tend to invest nationally rather than specifically within the Council's own area.

1.15 The Council will support and invest in appropriate opportunities presented by renewable energy, particularly wave and tidal power. We will continue to develop the Highlands as a centre for research & development, fabrication and engineering.

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Good progress is being made on this commitment. The first phase of the tidal scheme for the Inner Sound has consent and works have started. Whilst Sea Generation's tidal scheme application (Kyle Rhea) has been withdrawn, Pelamis (Farr Point wave scheme) has gone into administration and Duncansby Head tidal scheme has yet to be submitted as an application, these matters are beyond our control. We are supportive of the consented developments at Nigg, Kishorn, Ardersier and Scrabster to enable shore bases to support the renewables sector and continue to work with partners to encourage business opportunities and other benefits for Highland's ports and harbours, shore bases and other key sites. Our installed capacity of renewable energy, including all consented schemes, has increased in 2014/15 by 428MW and stands at 4756MW; this significantly exceeds our target of 2908MW by 2017. Note that monitoring figures have been refined since last year, including reflecting the fact that the consented capacities for offshore wind are less than that applied for. Hence the baseline capacity information as at the beginning of 2014/15 is more accurately 4328MW (rather than 5080MW as indicated last year). Even if the large permissions for offshore wind and pump-storage hydro (2466MW) are not counted in the total, progress is good at 2290MW.

1.16 The Council will seek to identify means whereby communities can participate in and benefit from the development of renewable energy across the Highlands.

√

Following a review there are now 5 indicators monitoring community benefit from renewables, and during 2014/15 there were:

- 22 developments paying Community Benefit
- 26 communities receiving Community Benefit
- No developments were paying Community Benefit in line with our policy. However 4 proposed developments in Inverness, Nairn and Badenoch & Strathspey have agreed to pay Community Benefit in line our policy.
- No grants were paid by Highland-wide Community Benefit funds. Scottish & Southern Electric (SSE) released over £740,000 from their local funds in the Highland area during 2014/15. Full details are available in their annual review on pages 21-24 available on their web site.
- 4 initial contacts made by us to developers.

1.17 The Council will continue to support Highland-wide, large-scale employment growth opportunities in the Cromarty Firth (Invergordon, Highland Deephaven and Nigg Energy Park), Scrabster Enterprise Area, Ardersier and Kishorn and in the UHI Campus development.

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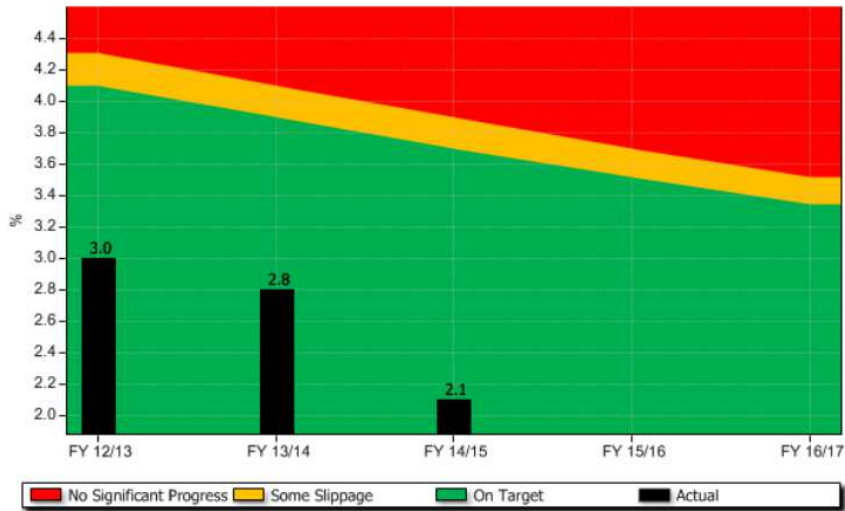
We monitor our progress in supporting large-scale employment opportunities through the available unemployment rates in key Travel to Work Areas (TTWA). These show good progress against the Scottish average in 2014/15 of 2.5% and progress towards the Highland average of 1.43%.

- Thurso TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 2.1% compared to 2.8% the year before.
- Invergordon TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 2.5% compared to 2.9% the year before.
- Inverness & Dingwall TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 1.0%

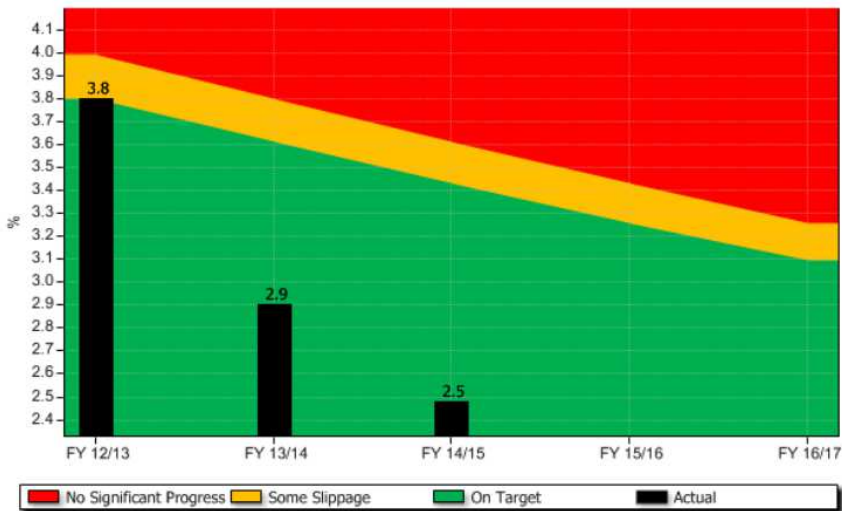
compared to 1.8% the year before.

- Skye & Lochalsh, Ullapool & Gairloch TTWA unemployment rate in 2014/15 was 1.7% compared to 2.2% the year before.

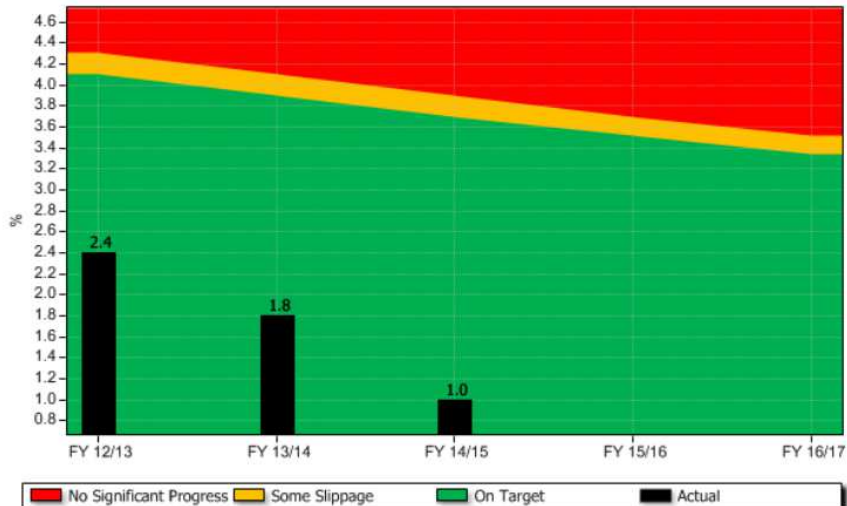
Unemployment rate in Thurso TTWA is lower than the Highland & Scottish avg



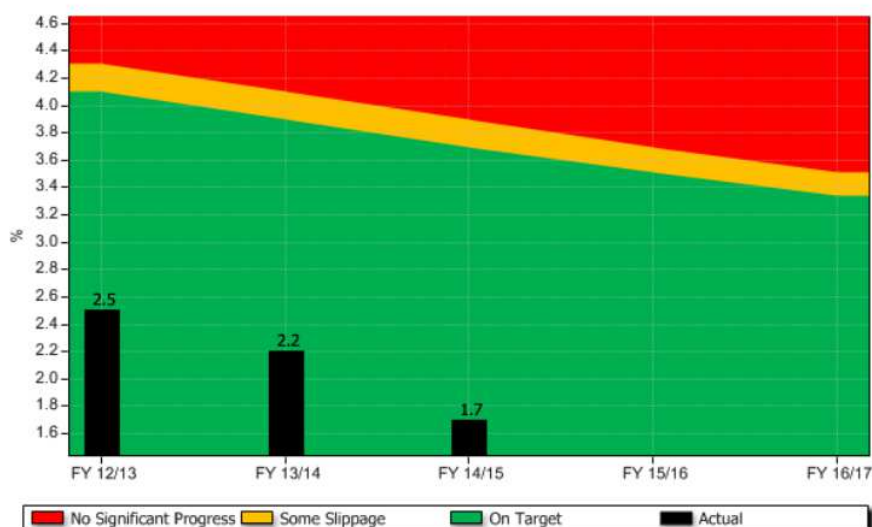
Unemployment rate in Invergordon TTWA is lower than the Highland & Scottish averages



Unemployment rate in Inverness & Dingwall TTWA is lower than the Highland & Scottish avg



Unemployment rate in Skye & Lochalsh, Ullapool & Gairloch TTWAs is lower than Highland & Scottish



1.18 The Council will continue to work with private and public sector partners to promote the Highlands' ports and harbours.

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In addition to the indicators on unemployment rates in travel to work areas outlined in 1.17 above, through our membership of Cruise Scotland we work to attract cruise liner visits to Highland ports with 86 visiting in 2014/15. A target was set to attract 130 by 2015 but this is considered unlikely to be achieved. In part this is due to flaws in the baseline figures on which the target was based but the number of visits is also reducing due to external factors including UK border control changes and a move towards larger cruise ships, some of which can't access smaller Highland ports.

1.19 The Council recognises the world-class skills of the workforce of Dounreay. We will work with the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, the Dounreay Cavendish Partnership, the Scottish and UK Governments and Highlands and Islands Enterprise to ensure Caithness and North Sutherland reap maximum social, community benefits from the decommissioning process.

✓

The annual target of 100 jobs (to counter the job losses arising from nuclear decommissioning) has been achieved, with 176.5 full-time equivalent jobs created or retained in 2014/15. We also continue to support the area's economy through the development of two new primary schools and a new secondary school in Wick; and a new council HQ in Wick (opened in 2015). We are also making progress developing the NDA Nuclear Archive/ North Highland Archive, which is due to become operational in 2016. We also provide staffing and office support to the Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership. In 2014/15 we welcomed the official opening of Scrabster Harbour Trust's Jubilee Quay, and worked with partners to support the efforts of Wick Harbour Authority to position Wick Harbour as an operations base for Offshore Wind. We also helped promote the North's Energy potential at the All-Energy Exhibition and Conference in Aberdeen.

1.20 The Council will monitor implementation of its youth employment strategy.

✓

In implementing our strategy and associated actions for youth employment, we provide a range of services which support and enable young people to prepare for and embark on their transition from school into the world of work, including:

- Information, advice and guidance helps young people assess their options in order to make informed decisions about their future career choices.
- Training and work experience opportunities were created across our services, private enterprises and third sector organisations to enable valuable experience to be gained in a variety of jobs.

- Support was also made available to both our Services and private enterprises to encourage the creation of both temporary and permanent job opportunities.

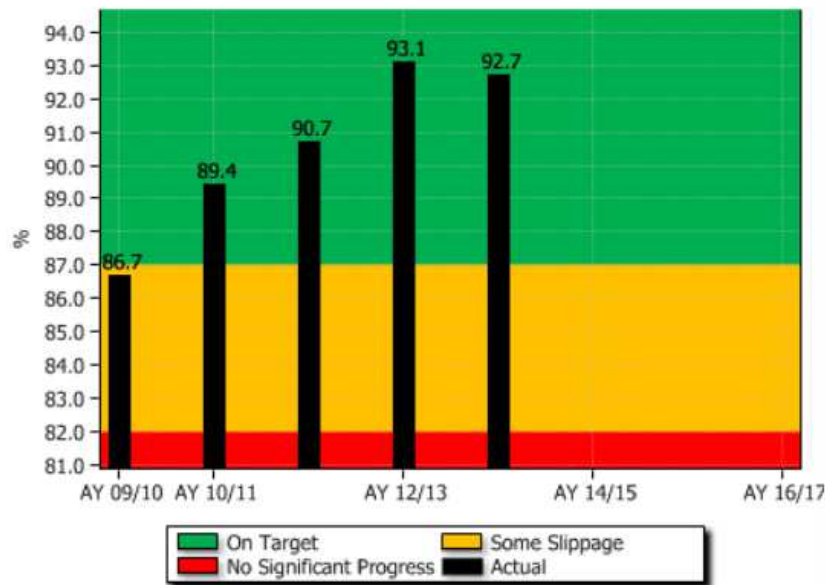
1.21 Working with private and public sector partners, the Scottish and UK Governments, the Council will aim to ensure every 16-19 year old seeking employment has the opportunity to access a modern apprenticeship or further training.

✓

Overall good progress is being made on this commitment.

- Our target is to increase the percentage of young people leaving school moving into education, training or employment by 3% by 2017. We achieved 92.7% in 2013/14 compared to 93.1% the previous academic year. Figures for 2014/15 (as normal) will be available in January 2016.

School leaver positive destinations



- We placed 9 young people in work placements with Gaelic organisations in 2014/15 compared to 11 the year before. Following HIE's research on the economic and social value of Gaelic as a unique asset for Scotland, "Ar Stòras Gàidhlig", HIE has concluded that it will in the future deal with support for "Gaelic projects" in-house. This includes student Gaelic summer placements with the Scotgrad Programme.
- Work continues with businesses through grant assistance, partners through employability services alignment and Council Services through their recruitment practices to increase opportunities for 16-19 year olds to access modern apprenticeships.

1.22 The Council will work with the Highlands and Islands European Partnership and the Scottish and UK Governments to secure maximum benefit for the Highlands from the EU funding programmes for 2014-20, including further transitional funding, and participate actively in key European organisations.

✓

- Figures in the Government electronic management system shows that no new grants were applied for in 2014 and that the Council took in £2,054,393 in E.U. grant.
- In 2014/15 we were an active member of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR), Euromontana and the North Sea Commission (NSC). We were elected to the position of Chair of the NSC Energy & Climate Change Working Group and also elected to the position of vice Chair of the NSC Culture & Tourism Working Group. The Convener was deeply involved in work to develop a NSC position on a North Sea Energy

Grid and gave evidence to the European Economic and Social Committee's hearing on an Energy Union. In the CPMR the Council Leader was asked to take the lead on Climate Change and was the key note speaker at an international conference on Employability. Officers were heavily involved in the development of the 2014-20 Northern Periphery & Arctic and Cross Border Western Scotland/Irish inter-regional programmes.

- We played a proactive role in the drafting of the 2014-20 European Regional Development and Social Fund programmes and input to the development of the Scottish Rural Development and European Maritime & Fisheries Fund programmes. A number of meetings were held with Scottish Government on concerns over delays in programme launch. We gained representation on the Highlands & Islands Territorial Committee and the Joint Programme Monitoring Committee.
- We responded to Government consultations on draft Regional Development, Social Fund and Rural Development programme documents.

1.23 The Council will work with the UK and Scottish Governments, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and telecommunications companies to seek to provide Highland homes and businesses with broadband, 3G, 4G and mobile telephony services fit for the 21st century. We will continue to support innovative and community-based schemes to drive delivery.

√

We continue to work with HIE to ensure the successful roll out of its £146m Next Generation Broadband Programme. In order to ensure that no communities are excluded from this opportunity we are liaising with Community Broadband Scotland to ensure the development of innovative solutions for remoter areas that will not be included in the current infrastructure roll out. We continue to lobby Scottish and UK Governments for spend on next generation broadband and we are currently participating in the UK Government Connection Vouchers Scheme. This is aimed at encouraging the take up of business grade broadband connectivity.

1.24 Working with Scottish Government and other agencies the Council will undertake a review of service delivery to remote and rural communities and identify a sustainable level of support necessary for the provision of services. We will develop new approaches to service delivery and community resilience in our most remote and rural communities, and pilot these in North and West Sutherland.

√

During 2014/15 work on assessing rural impacts was completed and informed by a member briefing. It was issued to staff through advice to committee report writers. Work began with the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) on developing a partnership approach to understanding rural fragility. The approach was later approved by the Board in June 2015. A new approach to designing transport services in North West Sutherland was developed and involved community bodies and transport providers. Local consultation on the review of service points was completed. This influenced the outcome for several rural service points.

1.25 The Council will seek to support the development of our urban centres, and put local communities at the forefront of these processes. Working with the Scottish Government, we will ensure that Inverness and the wider region realise the benefits of the 'Seven Cities Strategy'.

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Overall good progress with this commitment.

- We formally adopted the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan in late June subject to clearance by Scottish Ministers. In October 2014 over 250 comments were received on the Main Issues Report for the Caithness & Sutherland Local Development Plan, which are helping officers to prepare for the next stage, the Proposed Plan. Good progress was made in the

early stages of preparing the West Highland & Islands Local Development Plan with a 'Call for Sites and Ideas' to seek ideas and options for how the area should develop in the future. High School pupils have contributed to this early stage of the process.

- Through the Scottish Cities Alliance, City Investment Plan for Inverness – 6 major projects are on track for delivery over the five years period 2014-18 including Inverness Campus and the West Link. Work has progressed on a City/Region deal for Inverness and the Highlands helped by cities elsewhere in Scotland and through the Scottish Futures Trust. Collaboration has also been undertaken around Smart Cities and inward investment promotion is continuing.

1.26 The Council wishes to see Crown Estate revenues directed to local coastal communities and management of the estate transferred from Crown Estate Commissioners to the Scottish Parliament and local communities, as appropriate. The Council will continue to make a case for the review of the management and income derived from the Crown Estate.

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Scottish Government has indicated its commitment to the transfer of Crown Estate (CE) assets to local authorities who are interested in Scotland. Meetings have taken place with the crown Estate and Ministers on the subject and evidence provided to SG Parliamentary Committees. We continue to work with the Scottish Government and Community Land Scotland towards the transfer of CE assets to the Highlands.

1.27 The Council will maintain its commitment to land reform.

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We remain an associate member of Community Land Scotland. We have contributed to recent Scottish Government land reform consultations and prepared a paper on land reform for the Convention of the Highlands and Islands, the direction of which was well received. We continue to consider community applications to take on Council assets via the Asset Management Project Board and to transfer assets where community groups can demonstrate sustainable planned use at discounted values.

1.28 The Council will work to tackle fuel poverty in the Highlands.

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We lead an Affordable Warmth Partnership Group. An update on the work of the group was considered at the Community Services Committee on 6 November 2014. This indicated that while considerable work has taken place in Highland over the last three years to increase affordable warmth and to target information, advice and investment to people in greatest need, this work has taken place against a backdrop of increased heating fuel prices. The last Scottish House Conditions Survey (2014) reports 39% of Highland households as being in fuel poverty, compared to the Scotland average of 27%. On 12 March 2015 we agreed to join the Highlands and Islands Affordable Warmth Campaign.

- The proportion of our council housing stock meeting the energy efficiency standard (SHQS), in 2014/15 was 88.0% (subject to verification) against a target of 93% and compared to 75.7% the year before.
- The Home Energy Programme for Scotland – Area Based Scheme now in its second year providing home insulation measures (cavity or external; wall insulation) achieved 1111 measures in 2014/15 compared to 300 measures in 2013/14.

1.29 The Council will work with partners to campaign for fair fuel prices across the Highlands.

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Following a successful campaign, we have managed to ensure that the UK Government's Rural Fuel Rebate Scheme has been extended to various locations across the Highland mainland. We will monitor the situation closely to ensure that this scheme is successful in halting the loss of petrol stations, vital to the

continued wellbeing of many of our remoter communities.

1.30 The Council wishes to see a fairer system of local taxation than the current Council Tax and will work with both Scottish and UK Governments to achieve this.

√

We continue to use its influence at COSLA, at both officer and member level, to input into national discussions. At present officers are supporting COSLA and its response to the Commission that has been established to look at local taxation. The Commission will report in the autumn and it is anticipated that changes to local taxation will result.

1.31 We will investigate new opportunities for non-domestic rate incentives for town centres/specified streets or localities where support is needed to help reverse localised economic decline.

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Officers are considering the implications of the Scottish Government's recent decision to allow councils to finance their own local non-domestic (business) rate relief schemes. However the cost of additional local schemes will have to be met by the Council. Further discussion is proposed around the Business Rates Incentivisation Scheme, and use of the fund held in balances from previous years to see what can be achieved to support town centres across the Highlands.

1.32 We will explore all opportunities to promote wider application of the living wage across the Highlands.

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In respect of works and services related procurement projects, potential contactors are asked to provide evidence of their ethical treatment of workforces both in their own organisation and in their supply chains and credited appropriately. Where there is the potential to include community benefits factors in the award of contracts, they are asked to describe how they will use their delivery of the contract to further these good practices. It is anticipated that once the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act comes in to force (no later than 31st March 2016) greater emphasis will require to be focussed on these issues.

2. Working together for our children & young people
Ag obair còmhla airson ar cloinn agus ar n-òigridh

2.1 The Council aims to 'Get it Right for Every Child' in the Highlands and to tackle inequality early. In doing so, we will develop our pioneering integration work of children's services with NHS Highland.

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- Low levels of child protection re-registrations (12 months or less between registrations) have been sustained at 3.67% for 2014/15 compared to 5.31% the year before.
- Various audits are undertaken annually with child's Plan relating to different groups of children/young people. While there is some variation, the numbers of children with additional support needs who have plans in place continues to increase, with 97% of children with high levels of need now having plans.
- The Family Teams were fully implemented in October 2014, offering an integrated health and social care service for Early Years, School Years and Care and Protection.

2.2 The Council will ensure that every child aged 3-4, and every looked after child aged 2 in the Highlands will have access to 600 flexible learning and childcare hours, in line with the Scottish Government's coming Children's Services Bill.

√C

A dedicated infrastructure is now in place which enabled implementation of 600

hours per year of flexible childcare and early learning from August 2014. This commitment has now been met.

2.3 The Council will implement the Scottish Government's Early Years Framework, and continue support for wraparound childcare across the Highlands.

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In addition to the work on implementing 600 hours/year flexible childcare and early learning outlined at 2.2 & 2.4 the following has been achieved:

- The Supporting Parents Improvement Group oversees the Highland Parent Support Framework (Getting it Right for Every Parent). This focuses on universal support for all parents and targeted support for those with additional needs. The mapping of existing provision across the family teams is now concluding and the next step will be to develop local improvement plans based on what currently exists and agreed local needs. This will be done through local engagement.
- Wraparound childcare is being provided in every associated school group where there is evidence of financially viable demand; we are also testing flexible delivery of the 600 hours of early learning and childcare in 3 Inverness based primary schools with a plan to roll out across the Highlands once tests are complete.
- We aim to maintain the 95% uptake of the MMR1 vaccine (% of 5 year olds). This has been consistently achieved since 2013/14. The uptake rates are reported quarterly by Information Services Division (ISD) and the uptake rate for year ending 2014/15 was 96.9%.
- The level of new-born babies exclusively breastfed at their 6-8 weeks review in the first three quarters of 2014/15 (for which local figures are available) was 30.5%, this compared to 31.2% the previous year. The local target is 36%. The rates in Highland have been maintained above the Scottish average (27.1%), but have remained static for a number of years, despite a range of improvement activities. NHS Highland is recommending that a longer term target with an aim of achieving an uptake rate of 33% by 2022 is agreed.
- Data is no longer available for the allocation of the Health Plan indicator at 6-8 weeks. Against a target of 95% the last reported dated in 2012/13 shows 97.25% achieved and 96% in quarter one of 2013/14.

2.4 The Council will work with communities to identify innovative and affordable solutions to nursery provision. Where appropriate support will be given to establish co-operative provision.

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Performance is reported at 2.2 above.

2.5 Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will ensure that teachers and Head Teachers have access to the necessary support and resources to continue to deliver the experiences and learning outcomes in a Curriculum for Excellence.

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- Additional Scottish Government funds to support the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Implementation Plan have ensured that teachers have delivered the outcomes and experiences of the Broad General Education and the new national qualifications up to level 6. Further support will be provided during 2015-16 to ensure the delivery of level 7 courses.
- A revised policy on professional review and development (PRD) policy, in place since December 2013, is becoming embedded in schools. The policy was recently reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose and some amendments were made which were approved by the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers in June 2015. Through the new approaches to PRD and professional update, teachers have ownership of their own professional learning, supported by the Service. In addition, the Service Improvement Plan (SIP) has recently been reviewed and continuing

professional development (CPD) appropriate to the needs identified in the SIP will continue to be provided and developed where necessary.

2.6 The Council will seek to maintain and build on high educational standards across the Highlands.

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Relevant performance is also reported at 2.5 above. Data for secondary schools average tariff scores for 2014/15 will not be available until mid-September 2015 when it is published at a national level. In addition the overall approach has changed and the indicator subdivided into the average tariff scores for the lowest performing 20%, middle 60% and top 20% of school leavers only at S4, S5 & S6. Data for 2013/14 is now available for these average tariff scores within the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The scores cover the average total points awarded for all exam results. The scores are:

- S4/5/6 lowest 20% at 175 (national comparator 163), baseline 151 in 2011/12.
- S4/5/6 middle 60% at 793 (national comparator 805), baseline 789 in 2011/12.
- S4/5/6 top 20% at 1763 (national comparator 1817), baseline 1747 in 2011/12.
- 5 schools inspected have achieved satisfactory or better gradings from Education Scotland in 2014/15. The percentage of schools achieving satisfactory or better gradings in Education Scotland inspections decreased from 84.2% in 13/14 to 71.4% in 2014/15 against a target of 90%. There were 7 schools inspected.
- Schools continue to develop tracking and monitoring systems. We will now collect examples of good practice and begin to formulate a strategic approach on tracking and monitoring of the pupils 3-15 years progress.

2.7 Opportunities for those with a learning or physical disability, or those who are at a social disadvantage, will be provided so that every child is offered an educational experience best suited to their needs.

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- The proportion of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) who are able to sustain full time education increased from 94% in 2013/14 to 99% in 2014/15.
- The percentage of children with high level ASN who have child's plans has increased from 95% in 2013/14 to 97% in 2014/15
- To improve the quality of handover of planning and support arrangements for young people with continuing needs into adulthood, the protocol between children's and adult services is being revised to take account of the Children and Young People's Act and the two services are working to ensure that transition planning starts at an earlier stage.
- Our bi-annual survey of pupils carried out in October 2013 shows a positive picture with 87.5% reporting a positive learning environment. Next survey is due October 2015.
- Further development work will be required to ensure the CfE programmes meet the needs of all pupils.

2.8 The Council will work with the Scottish Government to continue to develop an ambitious 10-year capital programme to provide modern schools in the Highlands. We are determined to ensure the completion of the current school buildings programme.

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While there has been some slippage in the capital programme for the school estate progress has been made during financial year 2014-15 on a number of significant projects. The highlights are as follows;

- Fort William: works on site commenced during 2014/15 at the following new schools; Lundavra Primary, Fort William Gaelic Primary and the Caol

Joint Campus. The major phased refurbishment at Lochaber High School continues, with work ongoing for phases 3 and 4.

- Wick: works on site commenced at the new Noss Primary and Wick Campus.
- Inverness: works commenced on the new Inverness Royal Academy
- Special Schools: work commenced on new modular units at St Clements, Dingwall and St Duthus, Tain.
- A major refurbishment at Cromarty Primary School commenced.
- Thurso library refurbishment commenced.
- Inverness Leisure refurbishment project commenced.
- Free School Meals for P1-3 and expansion of Early Years with funding from Scottish Government secured and projects commenced.

However, despite the significant highlights described above, there was some slippage against the capital programme overall. The year-end position was a £1m underspend, representing approximately 2% of the programmed budget. The main areas of slippage related to Lochaber High School refurbishment phase 3, Fort William, New Lundavra Primary and Wick, New Noss Primary.

2.9 The Council will work for the very best standards as corporate parents for all children in our care, helping them reach their full potential and play an active part in Highland life, beyond care.

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In addition to CfE implementation reported in 2.7 above, across a range of indicators there has been improvement, performance maintained, or some decline in performance.

- Against a target to ensure 95% statutory health assessments are done within 4 weeks of becoming looked after, we achieved 70.4% at the end of 2014/15, compared to 82.8% the previous year. Although performance has improved since integration (30%) the target has never been achieved. The main reasons for the 4 week timescale not being achieved are late notification of a child becoming looked after, competing workload priorities for health visitors and school nurses and the demands of universal immunisation programmes. There is no comparable performance data for other Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) and in most other parts of Scotland this is done either by a dedicated Looked After Children (LAC) team or by paediatricians.
- Of those children who need to live away from the family home, but can be supported in kinship care, the proportion who do so reduced to 14.6% at the end of 2014/15 compared to 18.3% the year before. A further 76 children were being supported with an allowance on a Residence Order, compared to 72 the previous year. Finalisation of plans for kinship care has been subject to delay in some cases. Tighter management oversight has been implemented to reduce delay. The staff procedural guidance has been revised following a complaint.
- The length of time it takes to place children with permanent carers once a decision has been made to do this. During 2014/15, the average time was 15 months, an increase from 9 months the previous year. Improvement in permanence planning is a priority for the service. Analysis has been carried out to identify the factors behind delay. These include overall workload, complexity of cases, decisions taken by the Children's Panel and the need to assess potential kinship carers. Further work is being conducted with support from an external adviser. Training has been offered to all relevant staff.
- The total number of young people supported through the Family Firm Scheme increased to 23 during 2014/15 with 36 referrals.
- We aim to have fewer looked after children in out of authority placements. At the end of 2014/15, there were 46, the same number as the previous

year. This reports on spot-purchased placements whether in or out of the Highland area. As our focus is on returning young people to the area, a decision was made to also report spot-purchased placements out with Highland only. This has created a new indicator and baseline for comparison in future years which will be the focus of reporting. For 2014/15 there were 27 placements out with Highland area.

- As corporate parents we review the opportunities looked after children have to ensure they develop personal interests and hobbies. We have now established a Champions Board for care experienced children and young people and this will be one of the areas it will consider.
- We are taking measures to reduce the number of placement moves. Placement moves continue to be monitored. Individual cases are audited and common themes identified which will be incorporated into the Improvement plan.
- We are undertaking an extensive programme of new school buildings, all of which will be designed to meet modern standards and to fully comply with current legislation. We also continue to make improvements to existing school facilities to address issues with condition, sufficiency and suitability, and also to meet the needs of individual pupils as they arise. A 10 year capital programme was approved in March 2015 which includes funding that can be used each year to address these demands wherever possible. Work is underway in identifying capital investment priorities for the coming years and further details will be reported to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee later this year.

2.10 The Council will provide for two school periods of physical activity every week for S1-S4 pupils. By 2014, we will ensure that all primary school children enjoy at least two hours of physical activity every week.

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Through a 5-15 years Physical Activity Plan there will be two secondary school periods and two hours in primary schools of physical activity each week. The percentage of schools achieving this provision during session 14-15 has risen from 96% to 98%. A small number of schools have still been unable to achieve this level of provision due to resource and curricular difficulties. Further work will be done to try to overcome these difficulties.

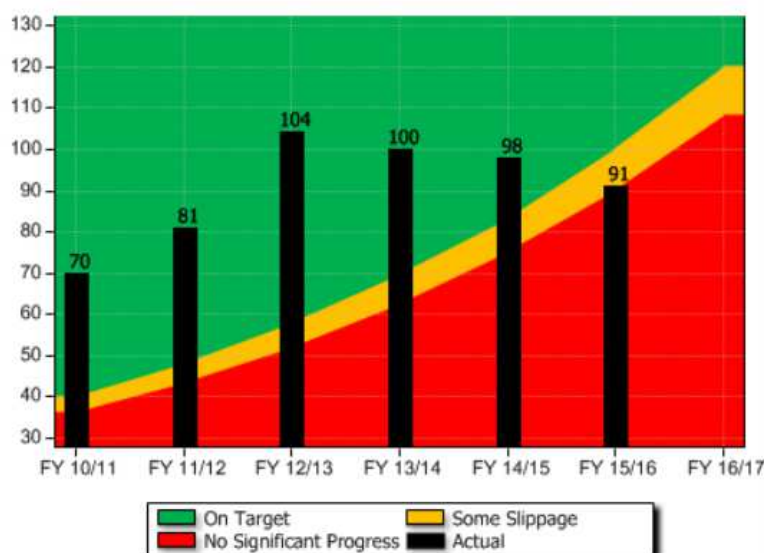
2.11 The Council will promote energy efficiency in Highland schools, and build on the success of our 'eco-schools'.

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Activity in this area for schools and early years centres is being largely maintained with small variances:

- During 2014/15 we maintained the number of schools in bronze eco awards at 148 (152 in 2013/14) and with silver awards 147 9148 IN 2013/14). The number of schools achieving or maintaining the prestigious Green Flag award was 98 in 2014/15 compared to 100 the previous year.

Eco school Green Flag status



- Our Early Years Centres are all expected to achieve an eco-schools award by 2017. During 2014/15 there were 39 bronze the same as the previous year, 21 silver (17 in 2013/14) and 1 Green Flag award (2 in 2013/14).
- 10% of schools (22) were engaged with the energy element and 2.6% (5) the waste element of the Schools Global Footprint Project. For the energy element there were 8 presentations completed with 231 pupils attending the sessions during 2014/15. For the waste element there were 17 presentations to schools covering waste awareness, littering, dog fouling and general environmental issues.

2.12 The Council will implement the Highland Play Strategy and maximise the opportunities for children to learn, develop and enjoy through active play. ✓

- There is cross-Service co-ordination to ensure that play infrastructure meets the requirements of the Highland Play Strategy.
- We have developed a cross-Service contract for the delivery of annual safety inspections of all play infrastructure due to start in 2015/16.
- We are supporting and consulting with communities to identify play facility needs through capital and revenue budgets. Communities are successful in finding and providing funding to more than match our investment.
- To implement the Highland Play Strategy, the Play Improvement Group/Play Highland have; run a second “Community Play Award” to identify best practice in implementing the Highland Play Strategy (won by Afters@Tracc); worked with schools to identify opportunities to enable community access out with school hours with work in progress to carry out community consultation in Ullapool next term; hosted a Play Scotland Risk in Play regional event; and facilitated International Play Association (IPA) Right to Play training.
- We continue to ensure all new school designs incorporate outdoor learning and play space that has been designed in conjunction with school staff and pupils and this will be taken forward through the capital programme.

2.13 The Council will continue to support teachers in their efforts to raise attainment levels in literacy and numeracy at all levels. We will work to maintain high levels of achievement in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. ✓

We reported on related performance on teachers CPD in 2.5 above and on satisfactory school inspections in 2.6 above.

Further training was provided to staff on the use the assessment data and staff suggest they are now becoming more comfortable in using the data. We have

started a review of how our own internal assessment system matches the Assessment for Excellence data. Further work needs to be delivered to ensure there are positive outcomes for pupils.

2.14 The Council will introduce a training programme, so that parents, parent forums and parent councils are more aware of their rights, powers and responsibilities, and are able to make a substantive contribution to the life and work of their school.

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An informal parental forum has been in operation for the last year. This will now become a more formal grouping with an engagement strategy and an annual action plan.

2.15 Gaelic Medium Education will continue to develop and expand at all levels. The Council will also support teaching staff as they encourage new Gaelic learners.

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A new Gaelic primary school (Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar) will open in Caol, by Fort William, in August 2015 and we are building a new Gaelic Primary School in Portree, all with funding support from the Scottish Government. The number of nursery, primary and secondary school pupils speaking Gaelic in 2014-15 was 1844 compared with 1827 the previous year. This does not include Gaelic Learners in Primary Schools, through to S.3. Our website has an online Gaelic Education map which shows all pre-school, primary and secondary Gaelic provision across Highland including pupil numbers and a contact email for public enquiries. We continued to deliver a pilot project with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Care & Learning Alliance in the pre-birth to 3 sector; and we liaise with partners to co-ordinate extra-curricular and other Gaelic related activities across Highland communities. A Gaelic Education Officer was appointed who, in concert with our Gaelic Education Improvement Group and Area staff, provided support for Gaelic teachers and support staff across our network of Gaelic Schools and Gaelic Medium Departments.

2.16 The Council will enhance services for children who need extra support, including implementation of the role of 'Pupil Support Assistant', investing further in social care, and ensuring a more personalised approach.

√

In addition to the performance reported in 2.7 above:

- Following piloting Self-Directed Support for children and families we implemented a new resource allocation model. Against a target to increase those receiving a self-directed support package 118 did so in 2014/15 compared to 81 the previous year.
- We have reduced the time that a young person waits to see a Primary Mental Health Worker, sustaining a number of months when 100% were seen within the 18 weeks target from referral to treatment.
- Work continues with NHS Highland to enable regular reports from the systems used to record allied health professionals work. Plans are in place for physiotherapy and occupational therapy to "test" the validity of the data from system reports and identify any further actions prior to setting up regular reporting. However it is unlikely we will be able to report the percentage compliance with the 18 weeks referral to treatment. Services continue to self-report the longest wait. Indicative waiting times (end June 2015) are:
 - Occupational Therapy: 35 weeks (patient focused booking letter sent but no reply as yet)
 - Physiotherapy: 14 weeks
 - Speech and language therapy: 38 weeks (children) and 5 weeks (adults)
 - Dietetics: 14 weeks
- We aim to reduce the number of children with Additional Support Needs

(ASN) who are not in full time education. To do this we survey schools twice a year and gather information on all those not attending full time. We use this information to consider the support and resources needed to assist pupils to return to school full time.

- The Pupil Support Assistant is fully implemented, and now allocated on the basis of assessed need.

2.17 By effectively and efficiently utilising new technology, the Council will promote a wide choice of subjects for pupils, in line with the Curriculum for Excellence.

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We have trialled several new initiatives which have utilised the benefits of technology. We have also begun to expand our online provision in the senior school. A strategic action plan will now be produced to ensure we maximise the use of available resources.

2.18 In line with the Scottish Government's commitment the Council will work to find innovative ways to introduce children to modern languages and Gaelic from an early age.

√

The agreed 1+2 language implementation strategy and spending plans will now be will move forward during 2015/16. Key resources and training will be provided for staff in school during 2015/16.

2.19 As part of our preventative spend agenda, the Council will commit an additional £1m each year for early years services and families. We will fully utilise funds available from the Scottish Government's Early Years Change Fund.

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An additional £2m preventative spend is committed to a range of early years posts as part of the new integrated family teams, which became operational in October 2014. This has complemented the additional Scottish Government Change funding, available over the past three years, to enhance early years services.

2.20 The Council will work with NHS Highland to achieve public health targets for breast feeding, immunisations and healthy weight, and to address smoking and substance misuse.

=

There is related performance information reported at 2.3 above. In addition we:

- Around 10,000 children participated in the schools based healthy weight intervention "High 5" with 796 interventions that met the Health Improvement, Efficiency, Access and Treatment (HEAT) target criteria. There is currently no healthy weight HEAT target so the programme will be reviewed during summer/autumn 2015 to ensure continued involvement. In addition, a ten step guide for staff working with families to develop a healthy attitude to food and body confidence has been developed in partnership with NHS Highland.
- We carry out The Highland Lifestyle Survey every 2 years. The Survey captures a range of self-reported lifestyle issues from P7, S2 and S4 pupils. The questions were revised for the 2015 Survey and in response to Teacher feedback will be carried out over a longer (6 week) period, later in the school year (May/June).

2.21 The Council will continue to encourage activities and services for pupils beyond the traditional school day.

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- The number of children and young people taking part in recognised leadership and achievement awards (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Awards, Sports Leaders and Youth Achievement Award) increased to 1259 in 2014/15 compared to 1081 in 2013/14. A new target to increase the number taking part in these awards by at least 5% during 15/16 is recommended.

- We plan for staff in Education and Highlife Highland to review progress in relation to the existing Outdoor Learning Strategy and work together in developing new initiatives.
- 2.22 Working with our many partners, the Council will seek to expand access to culture and the arts across the Highlands, and implement the Council's culture strategy.** ✓
- In addition to the report on the Royal National Mod at 1.10 above:
- Positive customer feedback for the Blas Festival continues to be maintained above 90% with 92% in 2014/15 compared to 91% in 2013/14. This is for participants satisfied with the quality of events and value for money.
 - We work with a number of partners to implement our strategic commitments across our Gaelic Language Plan; including those relating to Gaelic in the arts, media and heritage
 - We continue fund and support Fèisean nan Gàidheal, the Blas Festival and Feis Rois in 2014/15 and review their Service Delivery Contracts annually.
 - We funded and provided resources and support for the Royal National Mòd when it took place in the Highland Capital.
 - We also support FilmG -the national Gaelic Film Awards, and a number of community groups, and schools produced films and won awards.
- 2.23 Working with High Life Highland, the Council will continue to ensure that a youth worker is active in every Associated School Group Area.** ✓
- During 2014/15 there was a youth worker active in every associated school group (secondary school area including its feeder primary schools).
- 2.24 The Council will provide more safe cycle tracks and 'walk to school' pathways where appropriate, and will encourage healthier and greener methods of travel.** ✓
- During 2013/14 the percentage of children walking and cycling to school was 52% compared to 53% the year before. Figures are based on those schools that return the Sustainable Transport (SUSTRANS) 'Hands Up Scotland' annual survey. The number of schools with agreed travel plans is 82%. The Scottish Government's ring fenced allocation for Cycling Walking and Safer Streets for 2014/15 was fully allocated to a variety of projects that encourage safer walking and cycling in conjunction with School Travel Plans. We are working with schools to identify projects for 2015/16.
- 2.25 The Council will continue to roll out a single 'smart' card to all young people by 2013, allowing access to leisure, libraries, arts & cultural activities, youth information and school meals.** ✓
- The report on youth workers in 2.23 above is relevant to this commitment. We continue to achieve high levels of uptake of the National Entitlement Card (NEC) by secondary pupils maintaining 88% uptake in 2014/15 (National average 74%).
- 2.26 The Council will work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Higher Education institutions to address the issues of supply of Gaelic medium teachers. We will continue to seek funding for two new Gaelic medium Primary Schools.** ✓
- We are represented on the National Gaelic Education Strategy Steering Group (NGESSG) by senior managers and this group has developed a strategy to address the challenges faced in the education, training, recruitment and retention of Gaelic medium teachers. The NGESSG continues to develop programmes to tackle Gaelic Probationer, Career-long professional learning, and staffing shortages.
 - We have engaged with the Gaelic Immersion for Teachers (GIft) course run by Edinburgh and Strathclyde Universities, which takes non-Gaelic

Teachers into a Gaelic Medium (GM) environment for an academic year and aims to produce GM Teachers.

- Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar, by Fort William, which opens in August 2015 and Portree Gaelic Primary School (due in 2017) included a £4.5M partnership contribution from the Scottish Government.

2.27 The Council will ensure that all bidders for significant council contracts must provide targeted plans to recruit young unemployed people in the Highlands.

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- The Highland Construction Shared Apprenticeship Company (SHAC) has been formed and is currently intervening prospective candidates for 15 new apprenticeships commencing in September 2015.
- We will implement the relevant aspects of the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act as quickly as possible once they are clarified in order to optimise the use of procurement as a tool to minimise the effects of unemployment. A national date for commencement of the Act is awaited and anticipated to be prior to 8th April 2016.

2.28 The Council will introduce a single Children's Champion, to uphold the values of the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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Achieved in 2012/13

2.29 The Council will support the UHI as it continues to develop relationships with secondary schools, and as we seek to retain skills in the Highlands. We will maximise the opportunities offered by the new UHI Inverness campus and other UHI colleges across the Highlands, and continue to work with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig to further develop its community partnership projects.

√

We reported on opportunities to engage with colleges, Sabhal Mor Ostaig & UHI at 2.17 above.

2.30 Working with partners, the Council will play a full part in increasing the number of Gaelic speakers living and working in the Highlands.

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We maintained the number of 0-3 year olds, nursery, primary and secondary school pupils speaking Gaelic increased to 1844 in 2014/15 compared to 1827 the previous year. The number of adults learning Gaelic was 250 in 2014/15 compared to 286 in 2013/14. The target is to increase by 20% by March 2016.

2.31 The Council will continue the council's memorandum of understanding with Nova Scotia.

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The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia and the Council was signed in 2002. Under the auspices of the MoU, the Minister for Gaelic in the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia, The Hon. Randy Delorey, sent a warmly received video greetings message via YouTube to the Council and to Royal National Mod that we hosted in Inverness, in October 2014. Thereafter, the MoU was redrafted and is being finalised in preparation for a renewal event in during 2015-16. The Convener, Senior Members and officials met the Executive Director of Gaelic Affairs in the Provincial Government of Nova Scotia at the Royal National Mod in October 2014.

3. Working together for caring communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan cùramach

3.1 Working with the NHS and other agencies, the Council will continue to deliver the pioneering integration of health and social care services.

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In addition to work around monitoring Allied Health Professionals work outlined at 2.16 above:

- To achieve fully integrated front line health and social care services for adults a first single point of access has been established in 5 local districts in 2014/15, the same as the previous year, against a target of 7. We aim to have one in all nine districts by the end of 2015/16.
- Data is not currently available to monitor the aim of reducing the rate of emergency inpatient bed days for people aged 75 and over per 1,000 population. NHS Highland was not able to provide the data and it was last reported on in 2013/14.
- There were 49 people waiting for hospital discharge beyond the two weeks target in 2014/15 compared to 9 the previous year.
- There were 3075 bed days lost due to delayed discharge during 2014/15 (2680 in 2013/14) against a target of 1650.
- The aim is to have no-one waiting longer than 18 weeks from referral to treatment for psychological therapies by December 2014. During 2014/15 72% were within timescale compared to 78% the previous year (amended from 88%).

3.2 The Council will work to alleviate poverty by encouraging benefit uptake and supporting a range of advice services.

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- Customer contact levels with Citizen's Advice Bureaux (CAB) remain high with 55,419 customer contacts in 2014/15 compared to 42,415 the previous year, and with cases presented increasingly complex, including successfully appealing welfare benefit decisions.
- The financial benefit to customers from the advice given by us during 2014/15 was £3.974m compared to £1.634m the previous year. We also assisted 1330 customers with our money advice and welfare rights service.
- The national policy on free school meals for all schools was changed in January 2015 when provision became free for all P1-P3 pupils. A new indicator will be developed to report on P4-S6 uptake of free schools meals and data will be available for 2015/16 forward.

3.3 The Council will commit at least £3million of the Council's budget each year to spend preventatively to improve the quality of life for young people, older adults and those struggling with deprivation.

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- £2m funding for early years services has created 9 additional health visitor posts, 12 early year's practitioners, 4 social workers and 20 other posts to enhance support to young children and their families. These staff are being recruited to the new integrated family teams.
- £1m in funding to address deprivation has created Community Health Co-ordinators and Food Practitioners in our most deprived communities, additional support for carers and women who experience domestic violence, and employability initiatives, including for looked after children.
- In excess of £3m has been allocated to community-based social care services for adults within NHS Highland.

3.4 The Council will work with partners to complete the building of new care homes, run by the independent sector, in Tain and Muir-of-Ord. We will complete the refurbishment of existing local authority care homes and retain them in public or community ownership.

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The new care homes in Tain and Muir of Ord opened in June 2014.

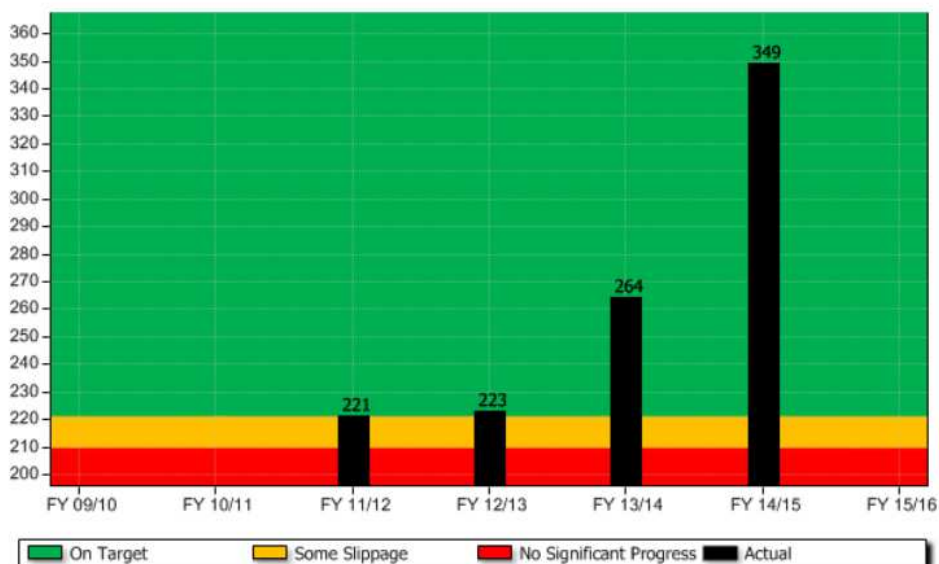
Refurbishment of all other Homes has been progressed. A new facility is being planned for North Sutherland.

3.5 The Council will establish nine district partnerships for health and social care.

C

- Achieved in 2012/13.
- 3.6 The Council will work so that adults who may be at risk of harm are better supported and protected.** ✓
- The Highland Adult Support & Protection Committee Improvement Plan 2013-16 is being implemented alongside a developing performance framework which supports a clear system of governance and effective leadership. The plan outlines a commitment to recognising and responding effectively to risks to individuals, supporting practitioner confidence and competence and to increasing public awareness and confidence.
- 3.7 The Council will appoint a Carers' Champion, responsible for representing the interests of carers at a council level and with other appropriate public bodies, and engaging with carers across the Highlands.** C
- Achieved in 2012/13.
- 3.8 The Council will appoint an Older People & Adults' Champion, responsible for representing the interests of elderly people in receipt of council services. The post-holder will also engage with appropriate bodies representing older people.** C
- Achieved in 2012/13.
- 3.9 Adults with additional needs will receive the support they require to maximise their independence, help promote and retain their dignity, and enable them to contribute to decisions about their care.** ✓
- The new outcome focused assessment tool (Personal Outcome Plan) was rolled out to frontline staff with a responsibility for undertaking assessments from June 2015 and has included a strategic training plan to support staff to work in an outcome focused way.
 - The proportion of people reporting that they had a sense of belonging to their community (as reported by the Citizen's Panel) was 70.7% In 2014/15 this compares to 74.1% in 2013/14.
- 3.10 The Council will encourage people to consider and make use of the opportunities provided by self-directed support.** ✓
- The number of people receiving self-directed support (SDS) increased to 349 in 2014/15 compared to 262 the previous year. NHS Highland has an action plan in place that outlines implementation of self-directed support in line with the enforcement of the 2013 Act on 1st April 2014 and includes delivering mandatory training on the SDS 4 Options, increasing the uptake of direct payments and developing SDS Option 2 (Individual Service Funds)

Increase number of adults receiving a SDS package



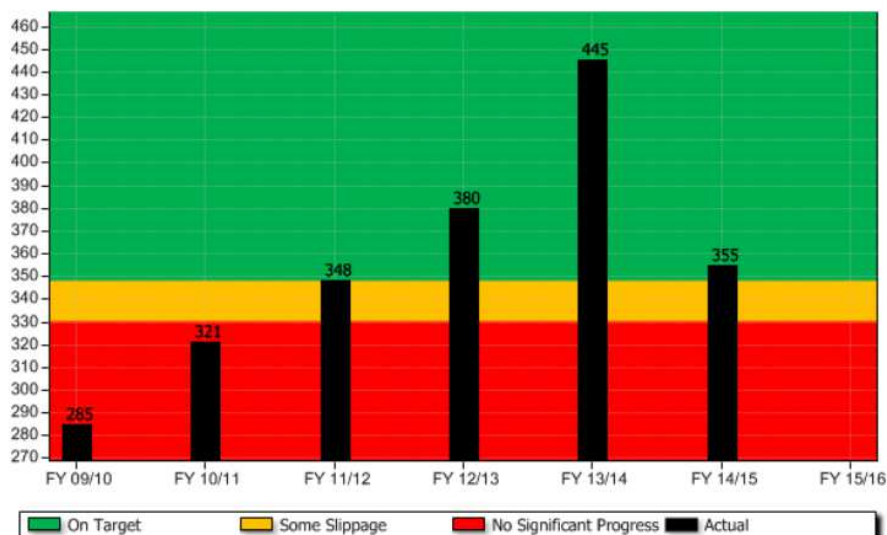
3.11 Working with the NHS and other partners, the Council will support people, particularly older people, people with disabilities and Council tenants, to get the most out of technology for personal use, including tele-health, tele-care and on-line services.

✓

The aim is to evidence the impact of the service on key indicators such as prevention of hospital admission and supporting safe hospital discharge.

- Telecare involves the use of technology to support people to live in their own homes, and over 2014/15, the number of people receiving high levels of such support was 355 compared to 445 the year before, and this remains above target. Telecare also provides a wide range of support from basic community alarms to enhanced telecare sensors and packages. The full range of services reached 7512 people in 2014/15 in settings including sheltered and very sheltered housing, residential and care homes.

Increase the number of enhanced telecare packages



- Visitor numbers at archive centres for on-line and public callers continue to rise supported by the addition of Facebook pages. During 2014/15 there were 283,292 on-line and public callers, this compares to 207,910 the previous year against a minimum target of 180,000.

3.12 Working with NHS Highland, the Council will ensure that users of care services and their families are actively involved in evaluation, quality assurance and decisions about their services. We will monitor and scrutinise the work of the NHS in this regard, to champion the needs and wishes of patients.

- The Children’s Services Plan, For Highland’s Children 4, is based on the self-evaluation of the range of services that we provide for children and young people.
- Every school, team and unit in Care & Learning Services has undertaken self-evaluation, and is preparing local service development plans.
- NHS Highland uses audit and self-evaluation processes across adult social care, including in care homes and care at home.
- With the Highland Quality Approach, NHS Highland has engaged with the 3rd and independent sectors and service user organisations in service planning and service redesign.

3.13 The Council will work with NHS Highland to support the retention of rural general hospitals and a network of local community hospitals and enhanced local community care services.

In addition to ensure performance on delayed hospital discharges and bed days lost is reported at 3.1 above. Performance has improved against most targets. The aim is to increase the number of people, by age group, receiving a care at home service, including intensive support.

During 2014/15:

- 2,407 people aged 65+ receiving a care at home service (2,396 in 2013/14);
- 949 people aged 65+ receiving evening/overnight care at home service (923 in 2013/14);
- 1907 people aged 65+ receiving weekend care at home service (1863 in 2013/14).
- 345 people aged 18-64 receiving a care at home service (330 in 2013/14);
- 103 people aged 18-64 receiving evening/overnight care at home service (111 in 2013/14);
- 197 people aged 18-64 receiving weekend care at home service (187 in 2013/14);
- The aim is to reduce the number of younger adults, aged 18-64, in institutional care settings. During 2014/15 there were 204; a reduction from 236 in the previous year.
- Integrated teams and the Care at Home service have been reviewing the reablement role as this has not been as effective as it could be in all parts of Highland. In more rural areas it is seen as integral to the care delivered by the entire integrated team whereas in the more urban areas, work is ongoing with Independent providers to ensure reablement is delivered swiftly as part of a care programme aimed at preventing hospital admission or supporting safe hospital discharge.
- From 2013/14 to 2014/15 the proportion of older people admitted to care homes aged 65-74 increased from 9% to 23% and the proportion of those in the older age group of 75 and over reduced from 91% to 77%. The total number of admissions was 44.
- The Older People Improvement Group have identifies commissioning priorities aimed at improving the quality of all services regardless of the provider and supporting people in the management of their conditions. Working with the sectors and utilising funds identified through the Self Directed Support approach has enabled the testing of different models of intermediate care and care delivery that will inform models for the future.
- The data recording system within the Accident and Emergency department

has not historically recorded a fall as a reason for admission to the department focussing more on the result of the fall e.g. broken neck of femur. However recognising the importance of this data in evidencing the substantial work on falls prevention, options to enable capture of this information are being explored with the hope that reliable information will be available in the near future.

3.14 We will continue to lobby for measures that will mitigate the negative effects of Welfare Reform on individuals, providers of social housing and the Highland economy. As the first Council in Scotland to work directly with the Department of Work and Pensions on Universal Credit migration for local claimants, the Council will also seek to improve communications, data sharing and local joint working with the Department.

- We have worked continuously with partners to mitigate some of the negative impacts of welfare reforms. There has been keen interest from a national level in how Universal Credit is impacting in Highland as the first live site.
- The Welfare Division of the Scottish Government visited in May and we regularly attend meetings convened by COSLA on Welfare Reform. The Local Authority and DWP Delivery Partnership Group looking at Universal Credit issues in Highland meet regularly in Inverness.
- Although the numbers affected by Universal Credit locally (and nationally) are still low, appropriate local support arrangements have been put in place. Our Discretionary Housing Payments budget allowed temporary respite for most social sector households affected financially by DWP's Under Occupancy rules.

4. Working together for the better infrastructure

Ag obair còmhla airson bun-structair nas fheàrr

4.1 Working with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and partners, the Council will strongly support the upgrade of Berriedale Braes, the whole length of the A9 north of Perth, the whole length of the A82 and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

Regular co-ordination meetings are held at a senior level, involving the Chair of Planning Development and Infrastructure, and at a more operational level with Transport Scotland to consider related issues. Transport Scotland will consider the funding programme for Berriedale Braes at the next Financial Review in Autumn following determination of the Trunk Road Order; the construction programme may then be established.

The A9 dualling project is progressing well with the aim to have 80 miles of the route between Perth and Inverness dualled by 2025. The Kinraig to Dalraddy contract has been awarded with construction to commence this summer with a construction period of 18 -24 months. Ministers have announced the preferred routes for the A9/A96 connectivity study, the East Link, with designs now progressing, close cooperation is occurring with respect to the related Inshes Junction scheme.

Consultations are ongoing and progress updates on the whole route between Inverness and Aberdeen are available on Transport Scotland's website. Dialogue is maintained with Transport Scotland over the A82. It has been agreed with Transport Scotland that Caol Link Road will be considered as part of the West Highlands and Islands Local development Plan and Transport Scotland have committed to be part of this study.

4.2 The Council will work with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and Network Rail to secure improvements, reduced journey times and fairer pricing on the Highland rail network, to protect and modernise the sleeper service and to develop new commuter rail opportunities around our urban centres. ✓

Whilst there have been staffing issues we have maintained a strong involvement through HITRANS on lobbying for improvements to the rail services. We have also been in discussions with both the new sleeper operator and network Rail generally on improvements to the network.

4.3 The Council will improve the roads maintenance allocation system. We will spend preventatively on our roads according to need. =

- We reviewed the road maintenance allocation system and reported this to committee in May 2014. Funding for routine and cyclic road maintenance continues to be allocated on a weighted mileage basis with strategic roads receiving priority plus an allowance for footways which favours urban areas.
- The outputs of the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS) provide the best information available on the changing condition of the road network. Capital funding for Structural Road Maintenance and Surface Dressing aims to maximise the life of the asset and was allocated between Areas on the basis of need as assessed by the SRMCS data.
- £1.25m revenue budget was ring-fenced for piloting innovative techniques for patching, recycling roads, prioritisation of drainage, ditch and offlets cleaning and vehicle/fuel management. Progress on this “Roads Innovation” funding was reported to every Community Services Committee in 2014/15. In the medium to longer term it is anticipated that such innovation will help to reduce unit costs.
- The percentage of the road network that was considered for maintenance was 36.2% in 2014/15 compared to 35.6% in 2013/14, against a target of 34% or lower. The level of road maintenance funding, good road drainage and the severity of winter weather are the main factors affecting the trend in road condition and the beneficial effect of expenditure takes a couple of years to appear in the measured road condition. Analysis of the SRMCS data based on deterioration modelling shows that expenditure is well below that needed to produce an overall improvement in condition.

4.4 The Council will instigate a co-ordinated, thorough, Highland-wide programme of inspecting watercourses and cleaning gullies & ditches to avoid further water damage and support future repairs, and we will make this programme available to the public. =

- A programme of roadside ditch maintenance works was developed for Black Isle and Lochaber utilising the survey data produced from the specialist in-house surveys using a graduate intern. A sustainable solution to completion of highland wide surveys being assessed.
- On-going programme of gully emptying work has been published.
- A vehicle tracking trial allowed improved productivity to be delivered in all areas. The success of the trial has supported implementation of a follow on programme of implementation of vehicle tracking across the Council’s fleet.

4.5 The Council will develop options for a long-term solution which provides a secure and effective transport link between Lochcarron and the Lochalsh area in consultation with partners and the local community, and pursue the options for securing external funding. ✓

Committee approval has been obtained to limit the options under consideration to two routes, the Southern Option Glen Udalain, and the north option involving the bridge crossing of Strome Narrows. A funding strategy group has been formed and funding options reviewed and considered. Scottish Government remain as the

most viable additional funding stream and dialogue is ongoing, but it is unlikely to provide significant funding contributions to what is considered a Local Road Authority issue.

- 4.6 Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness West-Link road and the associated amenity and leisure improvements.** =
- All objections to the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) were withdrawn and a hearing was held with two objectors to the Footpath Orders and went well. Formal confirmation of the CPO and the Footpath Orders are anticipated from Scottish Ministers in the very near future. Planning approval for the Golf Course and Clubhouse has been obtained and the planning application for the Canal Parks Sports Facilities will be considered by committee in August. Works are programmed to commence in autumn.
- 4.7 Working with partners, the Council will support the delivery of the Inverness Airport Rail Link.** ✓
- Partner working with HITRANS and Network Rail is progressing. We are preparing the design for the car parking and lay down/drop off areas, and Network Rail are progressing the track side works. A planning application will be lodged in Autumn 2015 bring the work together.
- 4.8 The Council will introduce a plan for sustainable, integrated transport through the Highlands, including consideration of a statutory Quality Bus Partnership and support for schemes, such as the introduction of a 'Cool Rider' for young people.** ✓
- Work has begun on the review of the Integrated Transport Strategy in tandem with the Highland wide Local Development Plan.
 - Discussions have progressed with HITRANS and Stagecoach on the implementation of a Statutory Quality Partnership scheme for Inverness. A report will be prepared for the City of Inverness Area Committee in September or December 2015 and a decision made as to whether or not to proceed.
- 4.9 The Council will engage with the private and third sector to carry out a review of community transport across the Highlands.** =
- This work has been incorporated into our Transport Project because the same staff resources are involved. The Transport Project prioritised working on commercial contracts for public and school transport at the expense of reviewing community transport so further slippage has occurred. However targets have been set in the course of 2015/16 year for engagement with the parties involved and 2 reports to the Community Services Committee.
- 4.10 The Council will work with the Scottish Government and other partners, to improve cycle safety across the Highlands, and expand cycle routes.** ✓
- We are working with the Highland Road Safety Group to improve road safety. Accident statistics were reported to committee on 12 September 2013. In Inverness improvements to Huntly Street will introduce streetscape facilities to develop cycling/pedestrian access and at Millburn Road a digital cycle counter is installed as part of planned cycle development of the area. Across Highland many more projects are being delivered to expand national cycle routes, improve amenities and encourage more people to cycle. We are working with many partners to develop sustainable travel including Highland and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS) and Sustainable Transport (SUSTRANS).
- 4.11 The Council will work with the Scottish Government and other partners to improve motor cycle safety and the safety of young drivers.** ✓
- We reported jointly with Police Scotland on road casualties to the Community

Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee on 3 December 2014. We work with the Police who take the lead on motor cycle safety with targeted campaigns at the beginning of each summer season.

- 4.12 Working with partner agencies, the Council will draft a Green Transport Strategy.** ✓
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Work on the Green Transport Strategy has been completed.
- 4.13 The Council will continue to reduce carbon emissions from its operations and work to meet the new target in the Carbon Management Plan (CMP) of a 21% reduction between 2011/12 and 2020. We will align the CMP to Carbon Clever Initiative.** ✓
We are now on our third Carbon Management Plan (CMP), which sets a target of reducing carbon emissions by 3% per annum between 2013 and 2020. For the baseline year of 2011/12, carbon emissions were 66,571 tonnes carbon dioxide equivalent (tCO₂e). Emissions in 2013/14 were 63,401 tCO₂e, a 5% decrease over the baseline year. Our annual report on the CMP for 2014/15 will go to Resources Committee in November once all the data has been verified. Work on refreshing the CMP to align it with the Carbon CLEVER initiative is continuing, with input from relevant Council Services. Additional changes may also be involved in how we report our carbon emissions if the Scottish Government moves from a system of voluntary to mandatory reporting.
- 4.14 The Council will work with Highlands & Islands Airports, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and partners to attract new and enhanced air services. We will support the development of Wick and Skye airports, and campaign to protect the Inverness to Gatwick link and reinstate the Inverness to Heathrow link. We will also encourage the development of new international air-links.** ✓
 - Inverness currently has connections to a variety of national and international destinations including Amsterdam Schiphol, London Gatwick and Luton, Dublin, Belfast, Manchester and Birmingham.
- 4.15 The Council will increase opportunities for recycling and achieve a 57% rate of recycling household waste by 2017.** =
Against our target to increase household recycling we achieved an increase of 0.6% in 2014/15 to 46.1% and we are making some progress towards our overall target for 2017 of 57%.
- 4.16 The Council will introduce a 'zero tolerance' approach to litter, including a review into the Council's bulky uplift charges, and extend the powers of community wardens to issue fines.** ✓
 - The Cleanliness Score (% of streets that meet the standards). This is a new national benchmark indicator, data reported to Council in March 2015 for 2013/14 showed a score of 99 this compares to the national average of 96. Data for 2014/15 shows a score of 98 and this is expected to be verified and benchmarked in October 2015.
 - Enforcement days in pre-arranged locations are undertaken and we delivered 107 promotional litter picking events in 2014/15 and engaged with 432 people.
 - We have implemented a zero tolerance approach to littering and dog fouling and during the period issued 36 and 13 fixed penalty notices for each activity respectively.
- 4.17 Working with the Scottish Government and partners, the Council will continue to develop flood alleviation schemes across the Highlands.** =

Phase 1 (River Ness to Friars Bridge) of the River Ness Flood Alleviation Project is now complete, Phase 2 (Friars Bridge to the Harbour) will be completed in August 2015. As part of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, we are working with partners including Scottish Government and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) in the identification and prioritisation of flood alleviation projects within Highland. Flood studies will be progressed at the most vulnerable of flood risk areas, and it is anticipated that flood alleviation schemes at Caol, Smithton and Culloden and River Enrick will be grant funded in the first Government spending cycle to 2022.

4.18 The Council will ensure the provision of allotments and the maintenance of green spaces and public parks across the Highlands and encourage various schemes such as community growing. =

- We are maintaining the existing parks and green spaces and taking on new sites across the Highlands
- We commenced a programme to optimise use of resources, on the Black Isle we transferred grass cutting in burial grounds from in-house to external delivery. Initial results lead to a cost reduction and improved standards to grass cutting and burial ground maintenance.
- During 2014/15 there were no further new allotment sites established, the total number of allotment plots is 314.
- Allotment targets and processes will be reviewed when new Community Empowerment legislation is enacted to ensure we are meeting our statutory duties.
- Community growing schemes are an area of growth in Highland. There are 33 known community growing schemes with others under development. We agreed to target our support initially to areas of concentrated multiple deprivation in order to reduce inequalities and are working with Community Health Coordinators to achieve this.

4.19 The Council will review its winter maintenance services, to investigate new areas for innovation and improvement. ✓

- After the alterations to the policy in 2013 we have reviewed operational delivery to identify efficiencies that could be made. This resulted in two main proposals which were considered and accepted in December 2014. As a result the number of gritters deployed will be reduced by 12 by the 2016 winter and stricter adherence to policy priorities implemented such that the lowest priority roads would not be treated before higher priority ones.
- We also reviewed how to manage and record action plans and deployment of resources and identified a web based system that could be implemented in 2015/16.
- Each Area Committee received a report to confirm the allocation of roads to the policy priorities and to agree the operational deployment plans.

4.20 The Council will work with the Scottish Government to press the UK Government for the same level of protection as previously provided by two emergency towing vehicles covering the Minch and Northern Isles. ✓

On the west ETV cover remains secure until March 2016. On the east a commercial solution has been secured, which is currently based in Shetland. Further lobbying activity will be required to secure the same level of protection beyond March 2016.

4.21 We will devise a comprehensive strategy to bring about a reduction in energy costs in the Highlands, including particular support for fuel poor households and co-operative fuel buying. ✓

Relevant performance information is reported at 1.28 above including the

Affordable Warmth Action Plan, council house energy efficiency and home insulation schemes. We have completed work on a strategy to bring about a reduction in energy costs in the Highlands, including particular support for fuel poor households and co-operative fuel buying. We are now monitoring the use of smart meters in Council premises including schools and this sits at 27.7%. We are establishing a baseline for Highland households and looking to make data available at Ward level.

4.22 We will adopt the principles of ‘shared space’ in order to find innovative solutions for reconciling traffic movement with quality public spaces in our cities, towns and villages. ✓

A number of shared space schemes are being progressed. We have completed design proposals for improvements to the public realm in Academy Street. Improvements to Huntly Street are now complete. Inverness Campus has been opened and incorporates elements of shared space across the site. We are investigating options for 20mph zones across our urban areas. The target to deliver to deliver 4 residential shared space schemes has been exceeded with 11 in 2014/15.

4.23 We will work with HITRANS and rail operators to seek expansion of concessionary commuter fares to routes south and east of Inverness. =

We are continuing to progress discussions through HITRANS.

4.24 We will campaign for incentives from Scottish and UK Governments to reduce the negative impact that poorly maintained buildings have in our communities. ✓

Scottish Government have implemented the changes to legislation where the Buildings (Recovery of Expenses) (Scotland) Act 2014 has introduced changes to the Building (Scotland) Act 2003, as amended and came into force in January 2015. Local authorities now have the ability to raise Charging Orders under the Building Act to recover expenses incurred in dealing with defective and dangerous buildings therefore, can be more proactive in dealing with building owners who allow their buildings to fall into states of disrepair.

4.25 We will promote seaborne tourism by developing the network of harbours around our coastline through a partnership of Council harbours, trust ports, community owned or operated harbours, and privately owned facilities, in order to generate income and employment for our coastal communities. =

Through the Leader and Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) funding schemes projects to enhance sailing related facilities were supported in Scrabster & Helmsdale.

5. Working together for better housing

Ag obair còmhla airson taigheadas nas fheàrr

5.1 The Council will work with the Scottish Government, Housing Associations, and the private sector to help to deliver 5000 new homes by 2017. This will include at least 600 Council houses and other affordable homes. =

- We built 173 council houses in 2014/15 exceeding our target of 120. We have now built 434 houses against our target to build 688 houses by March 2017.
- Through planning policy we facilitated the building of 874 houses in 2014/15 below our target of 1000. We aim to deliver 5000 houses through planning policy by March 2017; we achieved 2599 in the first three years of

this 5 year target. We continue to work with partners and the development industry to assist in the delivery of the overall target, by updating Local Development Plans and delivering an efficient Development management and Building Standards Service.

5.2 The Council will deliver an ambitious Housing Capital Programme, utilising innovative, environmentally sustainable methods to build new council houses and achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for existing housing stock.

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In addition to progress on building new council houses reported in 5.1 above we continue to progress towards achieving the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS). For 2014/15 the proportion of our housing which met the standard was 85.2% compared to 70.1% the previous against a target of 100%. An additional number of properties have now been categorised as exempt on the basis of cost / technical difficulty. As reported previously there have been particular challenges involved in installing new renewable heating technology in off gas areas. We discuss options with tenants who wish to opt out of works and intend to carry these out at future changes of tenancy. We are now expecting completion of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard programme in January 2016.

5.3 The Council will maximise the supply of new affordable housing by continuing to build Council houses and considering other innovative methods of funding new affordable housing to meet housing need.

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We have continued to look at new ways of increasing the number of Council houses to meet the target of a minimum of 688 new properties and 200 additional 1 bed units by 2017.

- We have built 434 new Council houses against the overall target.
- We have delivered 34 new 1 bed units and secured a further 83 for delivery this year.
- We have completed 90 homes utilising a housing trust type model which provides homes at a rent which is between market rent and Council rent, with tenants having the opportunity to purchase after 5 years. We are building a further 99 such homes which will be ready for occupation during this and next year.
- We are developing and promoting the Council's Empty Homes Initiative seeking to turn long-term empty properties into new affordable homes. Works to bring back a house in Nairn are currently on site with discussion with owners on properties in Muir of Ord, Dingwall and Inverness. Owners of long term empty houses are being reminded that we will apply Council Tax at a rate of 200% unless there is evidence that steps are being taken to occupy the property.

5.4 The Council will adopt innovative approaches, utilising the powers available to the Council, to bring empty properties, both in public and private ownership, back into use for the good of the community. This will include use of the powers offered by the Unoccupied Properties Bill – currently before Parliament – to increase Council Tax on empty properties.

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We approved a pilot empty homes initiative scheme, and funding for it in April 2013. Several properties have been identified with the conversion of the former Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) building in Tomnahurich Street Inverness complete and other properties in Dingwall and Inverness currently under consideration for grant and loan funding.

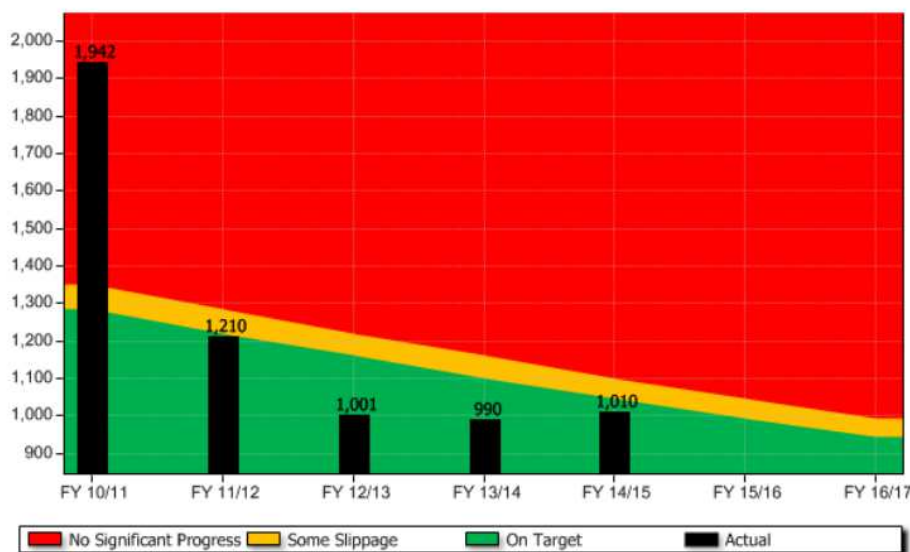
5.5 The Council will work with partners to reduce and prevent homelessness in the Highlands.

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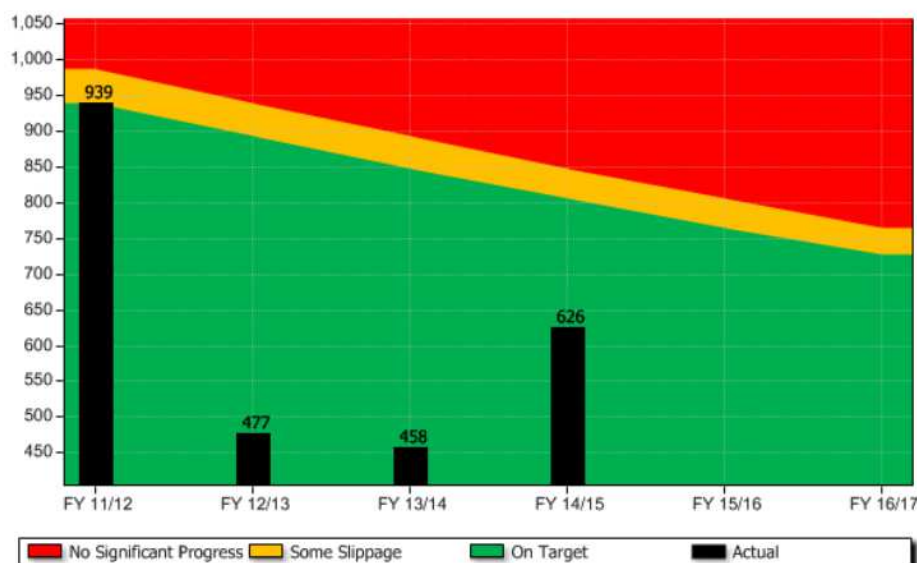
Homeless presentations have reduced from 2,147 in 2010/11 to 1010 in 2014/15

(990 in 2013/14), against a target to reduce presentations to below 1,000 by 2016/17. The number of households in temporary accommodation was 626 at the end of in 2014/15 compared to 458 the previous year and against a target to reduce below 500 by 2016/17. Changes are being made to staff structures to focus on housing options, homelessness prevention and case management.

Reduction in homeless presentations



Reduction in no. of households in temporary accommodation



5.6 The Council will work with and empower tenants to become more directly involved in the management of their local environment and council housing estates.



A new Tenant and Customer Engagement Strategy was approved in June 2015. This sets out the range of ways that tenants can become involved as volunteers in housing services and what the service will do to promote and encourage their involvement over the next 5 years.

5.7 The Council will work with other housing providers to develop a “housing options approach” to ensure that everyone looking for housing in the Highlands gets consistent information that helps them make informed choices and decisions about housing options that meet their needs.



We will be introducing an on-line housing application this year and this will be followed up with an on-line housing options tool. We have reviewed our staff structure and are implementing new staffing arrangement, including a new post of Housing Options Officer, who will act as a case holder for clients with housing

needs.

- 5.8 The Council will work with tenants to develop a “Highland Housing Charter” setting out our service standards and how we will involve tenants and other customers in measuring and reporting against these standards.** ✓

Progress against the Charter is measured through an annual report to the Scottish Housing Regulator and to tenants.

- 5.9 The Council will continue to press for the UK Government to write-off the council’s housing debt and seek to work with the Scottish Government and support its efforts to make the case for a debt write-off.** ✓

We continue to use every opportunity to make the case to for housing debt write-off.

6. Working together for empowering communities

Ag obair còmhla gus comas a thoirt do ar coimhearsnachdan

- 6.1 The Council will introduce local area committees. We will review the local area committee structure after the first year, which will see two pilot committees with substantial powers set up in Inverness and Caithness & Sutherland.** ✓

While this commitment was met in 2013/14, following consideration of the report from The Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy Members agreed to further work in 2015. We agreed to review Area Committees and local community planning arrangements at the same time. This was supported by the CPP Board. Work began in 2015 to identify several local democratic experiments before May 2017.

- 6.2 The Council will continue to engage with and support the work of the Highland Youth Convener, Highland Youth Voice (HYV) and local members of the Scottish Youth Parliament. We are committed to giving more young people a voice in this council.** ✓

In addition to performance on youth workers detailed in 2.23 above:

- The pupil engagement strategy has now been developed and will be implemented in 2015/16.
- The Child’s Plan format records the individual child’s views about their needs. It focuses on their engagement in their plan in an appropriate way and takes account of the actions needed to support them and their family. Individual plans are reviewed and also sampled for quality assurance.
- 98% of our schools had pupil councils in 2014/15; this is the same as the previous year. Schools continue to review their pupil engagement strategy. We will pull together examples of good practice during 2015/16. This will form the basis for establishing a revised measurement for pupil engagement.
- The Highland Youth Convener attends Council meetings and is a member of the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee. The Youth Convenor meets with senior officers; officials and partner representatives on a regular basis to ensure consultation and engagement in service planning and delivery.
- The Highland Youth Parliament (Youth Voice) continues to meet twice per year, bringing 80 Youth Parliament Members and partner organisations together to focus on a theme chosen by young people each time, for 2014/15 the themes focused on young people’s mental health and on the broader issues around education services such as personal and social education (PSE) provision. Highland Youth Parliament elections take place every two years and were successfully completed in 2014/15.

- 6.3 The Council will work in partnership with organisations in the Highlands to improve our use of video conferencing, teleconferencing and web-casting technology – efficiently and effectively reaching every part of the Highlands.** =
- During 2014/15 our Unified Communications (UC) Project installed new telephone systems to 464 users at 15 locations. The UC pilot based in Dingwall and Inverness raised issues which are currently under review. Further deployment has been postponed until the technical issues are resolved, and an improved quality of service for users available.
- 6.4 The Council will allow public petitions to be considered by the Council and relevant strategic committees.** √
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Achieved in 2013/14
- 6.5 The Council will improve public access, including out-of-office-hours access, to the Council and its services, offering members of the public a range of access points including by phone, online and in person.** =
- A Customer Services Board was created in March 2014 to review the service point provision for Highland Council and to review 23 out of 35 Service Points. The Review completed on schedule in June 2015.
 - We aim to have 100% of services capable of being delivered on-line accessible by March 2017. During 2014/15 we increased to 23.9% compared to 9.4% the previous year. Our new website was successfully launched on 29 May 2014 and will contribute to achieving our overall target (cp6.5).
 - We aim to increase the number of people who are in urgent need who are able to access 24 hour a day help through NHS Highland's out-of-hours service. In 2014/15 there were 10,377 people who people used this service, below the 11,150 who used it in 2013/14.
- 6.6 The Council will increase the number of issues resolved at first contact.** √
We aim to achieve a minimum of 85% fulfilment of customer contact at 1st point of contact, during 2014/15 this was 89.6% compare to 87.9% the year before and above target.
- 6.7 The Council will engage meaningfully with the third sector across a range of policy areas and in service provision. We will also agree with partners a joint approach to supporting volunteering and community development in the Highlands.** =
- In addition to our report on a social enterprise strategy at 1.8 above, we:
- We aim to increase the number of people stating that they volunteer on a regular basis. Feedback from the Citizens' Panel for 2014/15 shows that volunteering levels remain high with 39% saying they volunteer in some capacity (also 39% in 2013/14) and 51% of them say they do this at least every week.
 - Following an evaluation of the community networkers posts plans are in place to integrate their roles and responsibilities into the 'Lets Get On With It' Project. This project supports people with long term conditions to manage their own health. The Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan sets out a framework for each District to map out CLD resources and to develop local plans.
- 6.8 The Council will work with community councils and other community organisations to encourage community empowerment, and will introduce a community challenge fund of £1million of recurring expenditure to support community projects which explore new ways of delivering services at a** √

local level.

In 2014 the Fund was reduced to £0.5m as part of the Council's budget savings. In 2014 Members agreed for the Fund criteria to be broadened to include preventative services. In addition to the three applications approved in 2013/14 in Fort Augustus & Glenmoriston, Kyle of Lochalsh and Resolis (Kirkmichael Trust) a further 4 have met all criteria and are close to conclusion Alness Handyperson Scheme, Merkinch (For the Right Reasons), An Aird (Fort William Shinty Club) and Kinlochleven Trust. A further 9 applications have potential to benefit from the Fund and are at various stages of support.

The fund contributes to a culture shift of a more participatory approach to public service delivery at a community level. This supports the aims of the new community empowerment legislation. Two new and related strands of work began in 2014 with CPP partners: developing a partnership approach to asset transfer to communities; and a partnership approach to participation requests. These link to the new work to strengthen local democracy by encouraging more community activity.

- 6.9 The Council will work with public and private sector partners to maximise community benefits from new development, and to channel those funds into new community developments, training and jobs. We will encourage communities to make full use of the Highland Council's community benefit system.** =

In addition to relevant performance information on the community fund and renewables at 1.16 above, we also monitored the number and range of community groups actively involved in community based economic development. The 2007-13 LEADER Programme is closed and has not committed any grants since early 2013. There is therefore no activity to report on for 2014/15. At the end of the previous scheme there were 137 community groups actively involved in community based economic development.

- 6.10 The Council will support community, business and infrastructure developments through a successor to the EU 'LEADER' programme and other EU funds.** ✓

Following extensive community and partner consultation throughout Highland and the establishment of a shadow Local Action Group (LAG), the Highland Local Development Strategy (LDS) and Business Plan was prepared and submitted to Scottish Government. After amendments following the assessment panel, the LDS was approved, and efforts are underway to establish the Strategic LAG and Local Area Partnerships to deliver the Programme.

- 6.11 With partners the Council will implement the changes to community planning and develop the Single Outcome Agreement in line with the Scottish Government review so that community planning is effective in the Highlands.** ✓

During 2014/15 we responded to consultations on the Community Empowerment Bill which contained changes proposed for community planning. Most of our comments were taken on Board. Reports were agreed at Council meetings and at CPP Board meetings. During 2014/15 the Council and the CPP Board agreed to a review of local governance that will create new arrangements for local community planning. Several experiments are being developed.

- 6.12 The Council will ensure that all new school buildings will act as a community-hub. We will investigate new and innovative ways to deliver more community access to existing buildings as part of a review of the schools estate.** ✓

As highlighted at 2.8 above construction has commenced on a significant number

of major school projects during the year, and a number of key investment projects completed. Our ambitious school investment programme ensures that schools act as community hubs, with provision for Multi Use Games Areas and other spaces accessible by the community. We have begun a pilot during the year, at Lochaber High School, where Highlife Highland manages community access to the school facilities out with school hours, to improve user access and the customer experience.

6.13 The Council will continue to develop an events, festivals and public art strategy for the Highlands.

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Relevant performance information for 2012/13 on the Blas Festival and Feis movement is reported at 2.22 above.

- We are continuing to deliver on our commitment to host a Royal National Mod in the Highlands every three years. Inverness hosted the event in 2014, Ft William will host in 2017 with the 2020 venue still to be agreed by Council.
- Following a detailed and independent procurement process contracts for the delivery of public art associated with the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme have now been awarded. These art projects include River Connections (on site installations ongoing), The Trail, Resting Spaces, Sculptural Destination and the Gathering Place. The Inverness City Arts Working Group (ICARTS) Working Group has also identified an opportunity for a Children's feature and this is also being progressed. Consultations and public engagement is now ongoing and it is anticipated that all artworks will be installed in 2016.

6.14 The Council is proud to serve a region of many cultures and will actively promote multi-culturalism.

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- During 2014/15 we remained above target with 87.2% of learners who do not have English as a first language (ESOL) and who attended classes achieving accreditation, specified goals or progress to positive destinations (e.g. employment or further education) (88.5% in 2013/14).

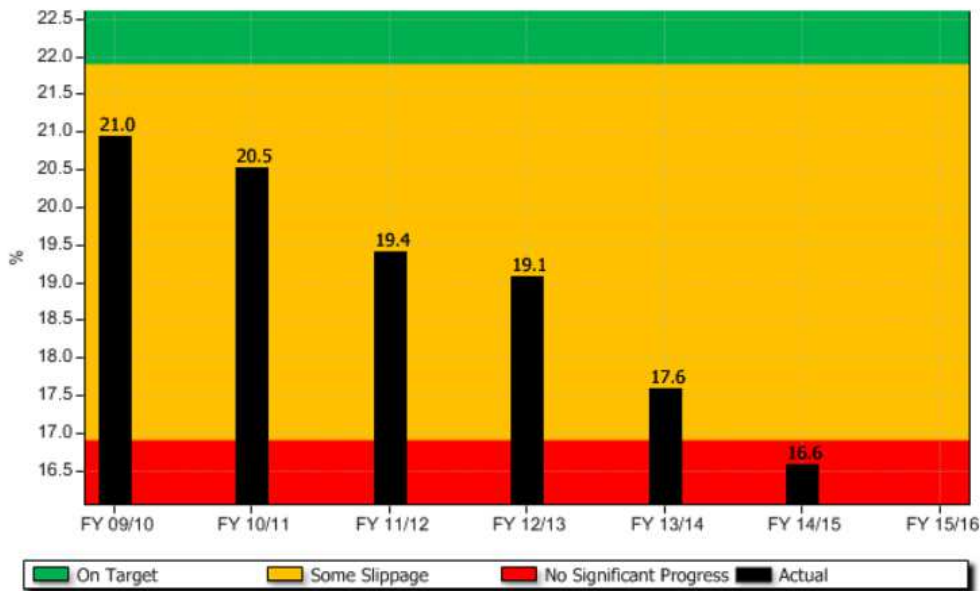
6.15 Working with High Life Highland and other partners, the Council will widen access to English language tuition, support Adult Basic Education and deliver progressive and innovative library services.

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Information is provided on related performance on adult learners in 6.14 above.

- During 2014/15 we added 55.4% of the recommended national target for annual number of additions to the adult library lending stock per 1000 population, this compares to 69.6% the previous year. This reflects a strategic decision to invest in e-books and online resources to complement hard copy books; the investment in procuring more inter library loans for libraries throughout the highlands and the national decline in public demand for non-fiction titles.
- We also added 114% of the children's and teenage target for library lending stock per 1000 population. This compares to 113% the previous year.
- While there has been a further decrease in the number of borrowers (active library members) as a % of the resident population, which in 2014/15 was 16.6% compared to 17.6% the previous year.
- Library visits remain high with 2.3m in 2013/14 and 2.2m in 2014/15. The focus for libraries (which is consistent with the new national libraries strategy) is to increase use and there are a growing number of people who use libraries without being members. Library customers place a high value on their libraries: when surveyed, 98.3% of library customers agreed that their library improved their quality of life; 98.4% rated their library as very good or good.

Library Usage - borrowers as % popn

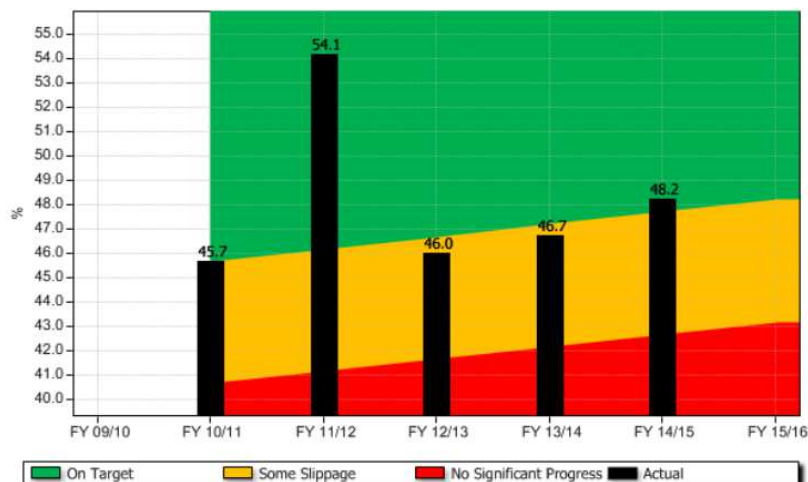


6.16 The Council will implement the Fairer Highland Plan, including the duties of the Equalities Act 2010, ensuring that staff and services users are treated fairly and with respect.

In addition to the detail of our cross-cutting theme of equalities and the Fairer Highland Plan at the start of this report item (C):

- Progress reports published in 2015 on Mainstreaming Equality, Equality Outcomes and Gender Pay Gap data.
- We increased the percentage of women in our top 2% of non-teaching earners to 40.2 in 2014/15. This compares to 35.8% the year before. (Including teachers this figure rises to 51.7%)
- The percentage of women in our top 5% of non-teaching earners also increased to 48.2% in 2014/15 compared to 46.7% in 2013/14. This is a national benchmark indicator and for available data for 2013/14 we were ranked 22 of 32 in Scotland with a national average of 50.7%. Benchmark data for 2014/15 is due in October 2015. (Including teachers this figure rises to 51.0%.)

Women managers in top 5% of earners - Corp3b



- The gender pay gap between female and male staff is now monitored and there has been a reduction in the 'combined' pay gap which includes full-time and part-time staff of 0.7% from 2013 (9.3%) to 2015 (8.6%). The pay gaps between: female and male part-time staff; female and male full-time staff; female and male non-teaching and teaching staff have all improved. In 2015 the full time pay gap for all employees was -12/9%. The part time pay

gap was 25.8%. (A positive figure denotes a gap to the advantage of male employees. A negative figure denotes a gap to the advantage of female employees.)

- We increased the percentage of our buildings with public areas suitable for and accessible to people with a disability to 95.9% in 2014/15 compared to 95.5% the year before.
- Following last year's redesign, our website has now been awarded "AA" (government recommended compliance level) accreditation for website accessibility by the Digital Accessibility Centre, an independent auditor who tested our site for common errors that affect disabled users.
- A new Promoting Equality and Diversity policy and toolkit agreed for schools
- A new Personal relationships and bullying prevention policy, guidance and toolkit agreed for schools
- Details were reported to CPE Committee on levels of hate incidents, domestic abuse and prejudice based bullying in schools in Highland
- There continue to be indications of improvements in support for tackling prejudice in Highland. We monitor and report on attitudes to prejudice and discrimination and in 2014/15, 76.0% of respondents felt Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice, compared to 76.8% the year before.

6.17 The Council will provide information to the public in clear language, to the 'Crystal Mark' plain English standard.

We hold corporate membership of the Plain English Campaign which includes some free training places and materials. Commitment to the use and promotion of plain English is part of the Corporate Communication Strategy through training and corporate standards. Plain English resources are available on our intranet and managers are encouraged to consider this as a core skill, as part of the Employee Review and Development (ERD) process.

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6.18 The Council will continue to measure its progress openly, report on it publicly and listen to its communities, to ensure we are delivering services that provide best value for Council Taxpayers.

- Audit Scotland reports that we have strong financial management. During 2014/15 we met the Government's annual efficiency targets achieving £7.945m against a target of £7.900m.
- Our accounts for 2013/14 received an unqualified opinion from external audit. We will receive a report on our 2014/15 accounts at the end of September. We also agreed our 2015/16 revenue budget and Council Tax levels in December 2014.
- Despite a number of budget challenges we reported an under-spend (pre-audit) of £5.9m in 2014/15. We met deadlines in issuing Council Tax bills and information.
- We realised benefits to the value of £2.135m in 2014/15 through our Corporate Improvement Programme against a target of £2.981m. Areas where a shortfall occurred were: Schools Business Support (£0.353m), Customer Contact Transformation (£0.155m), Income Generation (£0.137m), Procurement (£0.166m) and Transport (£0.100m), offset by overachievement of Asset Management savings (£0.065m). The slippage on the Income Generation and Transport projects has been rolled into the savings targets for the new Transformation Savings Programme which covers the four year period 2015/16-2018/19.
- We provided annual reports on corporate performance including Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) and benchmarking.
- We received positive reports from external audit during 2014/15. There were again no areas of significant corporate risk in the shared annual

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assessment by external audit.

- The public's overall satisfaction with our services in 2014/15 was 83 % compared to 87% the previous year. We are consistently in the range 83%-88% satisfaction.

6.19 The Council will improve public engagement, consultation and our handling of complaints.

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We reported on related performance on public and 3rd sector involvement in District Partnership at 6.8 above.

- We completed a two stage consultation with the public on budget savings. This involved running local public budget events, a budget blog, surveys of the Citizens' Panel and a newly created Communities Panel of community groups as well as running focus groups. The feedback from these sources influenced the decisions made on budget savings.
- The Customer Service Review has been completed and implementation will be completed by end of December 2015. The Review will release savings of £355k to meet corporate savings target and achieve re-investment into Digital Services to support the Council's Transformation Savings Programme.
- We aim to resolve 80% of all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. During 2014/15 we achieved 48.4% compared to 53.1% the previous year.
- We aim to resolve 80% of all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. During 2014/15 we achieved 65.8% compared to 66.1% the previous year.
- We report progress regularly to committee and whilst there were improvements in Q1 and Q4 the improvements were not significant enough to improve our overall annual performance. An assessment has taken place under the PSIF framework with an ensuing action plan which will drive improvement.
- 88% of Freedom of Information requests were responded to with the legislative timescales against a target of 80% this compares to 85% in 2013/14.

6.20 Working with the UK and Scottish Government and Electoral bodies we will encourage voter turn-out, especially among younger people.

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During 2014/15 we completed work to put processes in place to encourage voter uptake. Work has included engaging with High Life Highland and Highland Youth Voice to run mock elections, consultations with student body representatives in Highland colleges and we have supported the Electoral Registration Officer's initiatives to encourage registration. Social media was used to encourage participation including community council elections.

6.21 We will reduce the volume of printed material produced by the Council building on a current initiative for paperless Council meeting options and developing further options for members, customers and employees to conduct Council business on-line.

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In addition to accessibility to services via our website reported at 6.5 above:-

- In order to reduce the volume of printed material we have agreed to work towards Carbon Clever committees by 2017. In order to achieve this we are working with members to trial and identify appropriate devices in conjunction with development of the members' ICT service. The HQ chamber now has power sockets installed to support the use of devices. We also completed installation of new chamber voting system.
- The Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP), Business Support Project successfully developed and tested a self-serve HR system for staff and managers. This includes access to on-line payslips, P60s, and changes to personal/bank details for all staff. Access is work or home ICT devices

with the capability for all staff to access securely when away from work. As well as benefits to staff (e.g. access to on-line payslip and pay documents when at work or outside work); savings are expected from staff, printing and postage.

7. Working together for strong and safe communities

Ag obair còmhla airson coimhearsnachdan làidir agus sàbhailte

7.1L Working with the Scottish Government, the Council will support the maintenance of police numbers in the Highlands.

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To explain the deployment model further and to enable scrutiny of it, Members attended a briefing by the Area Commander in May 2014. The Area Commander for Police Scotland has confirmed that there are 638 officers employed in Highland (up from 524 in 2013/14) as part of the North Division for Police Scotland. This figure relates to a head count and is higher than the number of full time equivalent posts because of the working pattern of staff, e.g. some working part-time. All positions are filled and there are no vacancies. In addition to the 638 staff managed by the Police Commander for Highland, there are further 174 officers (up from 162 in 2013/14) reported to be based in Highland managed by specialist divisions within Police Scotland.

As far as comparisons can be made with staffing in Northern Constabulary prior to 2013, the Area Commander has confirmed that police numbers for the North Division overall have been consistently higher.

7.2 The Council will ensure that elected members will play a full part in agreeing the priorities and local plans for police and fire and rescue services in the Highlands. Elected members will also monitor performance against these plans.

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The first local plans for police and for fire and rescue were agreed in 2014 and they incorporated changes requested by Members. Following public consultation the local priorities for community safety have remained the same and plans have been rolled forward accordingly. Both local plans are aligned well to the Single Outcome Agreement and to the partnership priorities for community safety. Performance against the plans is scrutinised at each CPE Committee and from the Summer of 2014 at Area Committees twice a year.

7.3 The Council will effectively engage with and scrutinise the national services for police, fire and rescue and Scottish Ambulance Service. It will do this through its community planning arrangements, its scrutiny committee and a programme of self-evaluation.

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- The CPP Board scrutinises community safety outcomes and partnership performance quarterly. Reports were positive showing a general reduction in crimes recorded. Local joint initiatives continue and CPP Board and City of Inverness Committee welcomed the results from the Joint Response Team in Inverness in tackling anti-social behaviour. The model is expected to be developed in other areas.
- The CPE Committee scrutinises the performance of police, fire and ambulance services for Highland quarterly. From summer 2014 members have also provided scrutiny at Area Committees twice a year. During 2014 we successfully challenged Police Scotland's national policy on standing fire arms authority.
- The national inspection bodies for Police and Fire indicated no inspection activity was required of our engagement with national services in 2014 and 2015. Members have agreed to hold further self-evaluation workshops in advance of any inspections planned in the future.

- 7.4 The Council will ensure that low-level, low-risk offenders will make amends to their communities, through a Highland-wide Payback scheme.** ✓
- Criminal Payback Orders and processes to support them are now in place and well established. There are a range of schemes in place, reflecting local offending patterns and local needs. There were 576 Payback Orders in 2014/15 compared to 576 the previous year.
- 7.5 The Council will make full use of the Cashback for Communities fund, and will encourage partners to provide incentives for people to channel their energies in a more constructive way.** ✓
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- Achieved in 2013/14
- 7.6 The Council will work with the Scottish Ambulance Service, the NHS and the Scottish Government, to achieve better coverage across the Highlands. We will investigate sustainable solutions to improve patient transport in rural and urban areas.** ✓
- The Scottish Ambulance Service continues to report on performance quarterly to the CPE Committee where Members' scrutinise results and seek solutions to local issues.
 - The Lochaber Transport Advice and Bookings Service (LTABS) has worked very closely with GP practices in Lochaber, Raigmore and Belford hospital clinics, the NHS Patient Bookings Service and Finance Team, and with Scottish Ambulances' Patient Transport Service. It has had a positive effect on patient transport issues and our Transport Programme Board will meet in August 2015 to assess whether there is the potential for a long-term sustainable approach.
- 7.7 The Council will support communities to be more resilient to climate change and extreme adverse weather events, by implementing the Council's Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.** ✓
- Progress against Scotland's Climate Change Declaration is reported to the Scottish Government annually in November. This was done in 2014 (2013/14 period) and on target for November 2015 (2014/15 period).
 - The Emergency Planning Unit has continued to encourage community councils to develop local community resilience plans in relation to a range of likely major incidents, including severe weather events. This is being done through close collaboration with Scottish & Southern Energy's (SSE) Community Liaison Team and Ward Managers. Several workshops have now been delivered on how these plans are created by communities. Strontian and Arisaig were early adopters of the community resilience planning process as a trial. To ensure consistency of approach across the Highland area, template plans produced by Scottish Resilience are being used. Some 50 community councils have so far attended local events designed to support communities in developing their plans. Further workshops are planned.
 - The Flood Risk Management Act (Scotland) 2009 places a duty on us to assess watercourses. All watercourses have been assessed and a priority assessment regime has been established. Watercourses are assessed in accordance with the prioritised schedule and inspections undertaken, and all maintenance works that will substantially reduce flood risk are identified, scheduled and undertaken. The prioritisation and assessment regime is reviewed following all flood events. This process is ongoing.
 - The above Act also places a duty on us to publish Local Flood Risk Management Plans in June 2016. Work is ongoing, in close consultation with the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA), to identify flood risk areas, assess the flood risk, develop potential solutions and undertake studies to determine possible solutions. SEPA are to publish the Flood Risk Management Strategy for the whole of Scotland based on this information

gathering exercise in December 2015, from this information Local Flood Risk Management Plans will be finalised in accordance with the programme as defined in the Act.

- In 2014/15 agreement was reached with SEPA that, as part of the duties of the Flood Risk Management Act (FRM), surface water management plans are to be prepared for Inverness (with an integrated catchment study with Scottish Water), Smithton and Culloden, Dingwall and Strathpeffer, Fort William, Corpach, Newtonmore and Halkirk. These plans will be progressed in 2016/17.