

In Brief

Corporate Communications for staff

Gu Geàrr

Conaltradh Corporra do luchd-obrach

New Corporate Parenting Board to champion Highland's children and young people.

The first meeting of the Highland Corporate Parenting Board took place last month, bringing together elected members, senior officers from a wide range of public agencies, care experienced young people and representatives from the Third Sector.

The Board, which has a duty of care for around 500 'Looked After' children and young people in Highland, is chaired by Councillor Linda Munro, Vice Chair of the Council's Care, Learning and Housing Committee.

Last year Members of the Highland Community Planning Partnership's, Community Planning Board agreed to establish the Corporate Parenting Board to ensure all agencies are meeting the needs of children and young people in Highland for whom we have responsibility as corporate parents.

The purpose of the Board is to:

- ◆ maintaining a strategic overview of developments, plans, policies and strategies for care experienced young people and make appropriate recommendations for action.
- ◆ ensuring there are good working arrangements between services and agencies in support of the plans and strategies.
- ◆ providing a forum for care experienced young people to influence policy and to share their experiences of services they've received.
- ◆ promoting the Corporate Parenting role and responsibilities across all relevant bodies in Highland.

The inaugural meeting, held at Clachnaharry Old School, was an opportunity for all of the Board representatives to get to know each other, and chat to some of the young people who had come along.



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected – Being a high performing Council

The Council's Programme and Corporate Plan

The approach to developing the Council's Programme and Corporate Plan has been underpinned by involving and engaging the public in the budget setting process and in identifying and shaping Council priorities –

Your Voice, Your Council, Your Future

With over 50 engagement sessions, this focused on hearing from staff and communities about what was important to them, what they believed the Council should be prioritising and ideas for improving or doing things differently.

This feedback has supported developing the Programme - Local Voices | Highland Choices, and presents a vision for the Council which is to be an Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected Highland. The Programme sets out 51 commitments to be delivered over the next 3 years under six priority themes:

- ◆ A Council that champions the Highlands
- ◆ A place to live
- ◆ A place to thrive
- ◆ A place to prosper
- ◆ A welcoming place
- ◆ Your Highland Council

The Council's success in delivering its priorities is wholly dependent on how it utilises its substantial financial and physical resources in a sustainable way. The Council has to connect its ambitions for the Highlands with the resources required to deliver them. The Council must also be honest about areas where performance is not good enough and identify ways to do things differently and better. This is the basis on which the Council's budget for 2019/20 onwards has been built and will be supported through a strategic performance framework moving forwards.

Living and working in communities across the Highlands, Council staff are integral to this change in approach. Your knowledge of your communities, what is important locally, but also how the Council as an organisation needs to change and improve, are key elements moving forward.

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out the strategic and operational priorities of the organisation along with the



improvement priorities from the Change Programme and the Council Programme. The plan also sets out the measures and actions required to deliver and monitor the Council's priorities for 2019-2022. The plan will be supported by a Highland Improving Performance Programme (HIPP) which sets out an approach to developing a framework for driving performance improvement consistently and robustly across the Council. Together, this approach will ensure the Council achieves its ambitions, delivers these in a sustainable way and improves performance across the organisation.



"I am ambitious that we can be a high performing council, with a performance culture involving setting ambitious targets and regularly monitoring our progress to deliver the right results. We have some great examples of high performing teams which needs to be shared and supported across our services. Let us build on success and challenge where things can be improved and our services made more affordable and efficient. This will enable us to be more sustainable into the future, working with our communities."

Donna Manson, Chief Executive

The Strategic improvement priorities are set out here. Targets will be developed for these over the next month and proposed at Council in May. There will be weekly scrutiny of progress by the Chief Executive and monthly scrutiny by Members and a Performance Report produced annually from September 2020.

Strategic improvement priorities

- 1** Improve educational attainment for all groups and reduce the attainment gap for young people from deprived areas.
- 2** Improve the sustainability of education provision by: increasing support to Head Teachers; rebasing school staffing allocations to be transparent and in line with national standards; delivering best value; upgrading and replacing school buildings, introducing more efficient working practices; and improved budget management.
- 3** Transform the approach to supporting children with additional needs adopting a whole system approach to wellbeing and inclusion organised in school clusters and with partner and community support.
- 4** Improve outcomes for looked after children and young people and achieve better value from resources to support them.
- 5** Significantly reduce the end to end process for people applying to be foster carers and increase the number of foster carers and adoptive parents in Highland.

6 Extend free child care across the region to support families, invest in new facilities, achieve best value and embed early years services within the school system to improve outcomes.

7 Improve home/school transport provision, reducing associated costs and carbon emissions.

8 Work with NHS Highland to continue to shift the balance of care to more community settings and to improve the arrangements and outcomes for young adults with care needs transitioning to NHS care and support.

9 Deliver meaningful engagement with Highland communities, listening and responding to what we hear and encourage more community activity and community run services.

10 With partners grow the Highland tourism offer and invest in infrastructure.

11 Improve road conditions across Highland.

12 Improve business processes for waste management as set out in the redesign review (including reviewing: haulage contracts; collection route planning; new transfer stations; recycling centre opening hours; and increasing corporate recycling and growing the commercial collection base and charges).

13 Deliver a change programme based on the four budget strategy themes of: making the Council more efficient, commercialisation and income generation, redesign and improvement and flexible and well managed workforce.

14 Improve Council performance with the right staff in the right place with the right skills through effective workforce planning including training and development, wellbeing support, performance management and appraisal, transition, sustainability, flexibility and redeployment.

15 Improve staff attendance and reduce costs associated with covering absence.

16 Improve budget management and expenditure controls.

17 Increase energy generation from renewable sources and reduce energy consumption in the Council.

18 Create a fit for purpose Council property portfolio, through commercial sales, leases and community asset transfers and the right environment for modern working practice.

19 Shift the balance of property maintenance services to undertake more repairs and maintenance in-house and reduce costs of out-sourced trade services.

20 Improve efficiency through better digital services.

21 Improve income collection for Council services.

22 Reduce staff and Member travel, reducing costs and carbon emissions.

The Council is changing

The Council's budget for 2019/20 was agreed on 14th February and included a paper on "A Sustainable Highlands" which sets out the scale of our challenge, but also sets out how we can all work together to deliver against the commitments that have been agreed. In order to do this, the Council is changing - and we all have a role to play!

The Council's Change Programme currently sets out 15 projects. A Programme Management Office is being established to ensure that pace and governance is maintained on each of these projects and ensuring the related savings and improvements are achieved. Teams from right across the Council will be involved in making the change happen and a Change Fund has also been agreed to support the work required.

A Programme Board, made up of the Executive Leadership team is meeting weekly to oversee progress and ensure that the right resources are being put in place at the right time

to deliver the projects. Members will also be closely scrutinising progress as well as continuing to contribute to redesign and commercial projects.

Change Programme Projects

- ◆ Trades
- ◆ Grey fleet/staff travel
- ◆ Transport
- ◆ Waste
- ◆ Sustainable Education in Highlands
- ◆ Early Learning & Child Care
- ◆ Placement Services Change Programme (including Fostering & Adoption)
- ◆ Additional Support Needs (ASN)
- ◆ Managing Service Income
- ◆ Transient Visitor Levy/ Tourism Developments
- ◆ Energy and Renewables
- ◆ Asset Management, Property Rationalisation and Investment
- ◆ ICT Development/ Digital
- ◆ Workforce Planning
- ◆ Redesign

Examples of two projects underway

Both projects have come out of Redesign Reviews - there will be further reviews undertaken this year – you may wish to consider volunteering to be part of these reviews, and you can contact Malcolm Macleod if you are interested.

Trades Services

The Council approved the recommendations of the Trade Services Review in December last year and work has already started on a Lean review into how repair requests are managed, with the intention of making the process more streamlined and efficient. Savings in revenue maintenance can be achieved through ensuring that our contract arrangements are delivering best value and the procurement process is now underway following really positive cross-service workshops. These actions are just the start – growing our in-house resources for trade services, better cross-service working in housing and non-housing repairs and maintenance will come next. Support for this approach was also very strongly reflected in the feedback from public and staff engagement prior to Christmas.

Grey Fleet

Early analysis shows that we have delivered a 1.2m reduction in grey fleet miles during this financial year with associated savings of around £325k. A new Project Board is being established to ensure pace is maintained, and thanks are due to Keith Masson and Andrew Morgan for delivering this project to date.

2018-2021 Pay Award

An agreement has been reached on a national 3 year pay award for non-teaching staff. Please note if you are paid on NHS Agenda for Change Agreement, a separate communication will be issued relating to any pay increase to be applied from 1st April 2019.

- The agreement covers the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2021.
- Revised 2018/19 pay scales can be found on the HR Website.
- From 1st April 2018, 3.5% will be applied to salaries up to £80k.
- For salaries on or above £80k a flat rate of £1600 will apply.
- In financial years 2019/20 and 2020/2021, a 3% increase will be added to all pay points each year.
- From 1st April 2018 the minimum salary hourly rate increases from £8.75 to £8.81, as the Council already paid the Real Living Wage increase on 1st April 2018.
- From 1st April 2019 the minimum salary hourly rate will increase to £9.07 and from 1st April 2020 to £9.34, provided this is greater than the Real Living Wage set by the Poverty Alliance.

Back Pay

Payroll colleagues are processing revised pay rates for non-teaching staff in March salaries. Back pay due from 1st April 2018 will also be paid in March salaries.

Questions & Answers

Please refer to the Question and Answers below, regarding the pay award prior to contacting payroll.

When will my arrears be paid?

Employees paid mid-month will receive their new rates and arrears on the 14th March 2019 and employees paid at the end of the month will receive their new rates and arrears on the 28th March 2019.

What period does this cover?

Mid monthlies 1st April 2018 – 14th March 2019.
End of month payrolls 1st April 2018 – 28th February 2019.

What will my salary be from 1st April 2019?

Please refer to the HR website: <http://bit.ly/HighlandCouncilHRPortal>

What is the Real Living Wage?

This is an hourly rate set externally by the Poverty Alliance on an annual basis. The Council is committed to paying all staff an hourly rate equivalent to the Real Living Wage.

I have been paid the Real Living Wage rate of £8.75 from 1st April 2018, why is 3.5% not applied to the arrears?

The 3.5% applies to the Scottish Local Government Living Wage rate of £8.51. As £8.75 was paid from 1st April 2018, arrears are due on the difference between £8.75 and £8.81.

Why have I paid more tax?

As the arrears are going back 11 months you may have gone into the next tax banding.

The table below shows the Scottish Income Tax rates you pay in each band if you have a standard Personal Allowance of £11,850. You don't get a Personal Allowance if you pay top rate tax.

Band	Taxable income	Scottish tax rate
Personal Allowance	Up to £11,850	0%
Starter rate	£11,850 to £13,850	19%
Basic rate	£13,851 to £24,000	20%
Intermediate rate	£24,001 to £43,430	21%
Higher rate	£43,431 to £150,000	41%
Top rate	over £150,000	46%

Please refer to www.gov.uk/scottish-income-tax for more details.

Will I get a tax refund in month 1?

No, if you think you have overpaid tax you will have to contact the HMRC employee helpline: **0300 200 3300**.

I have paid National Insurance, I don't usually?

National Insurance calculations are based on the amount paid in that period and how much of the employees earnings fall within each band.

The amounts deducted and paid depend on:

- ◆ the employee's National Insurance category letter; and
- ◆ how much of the employee's earnings falls within each band.

Employee National Insurance rates

This table shows how much employers deduct from employees' pay for the 2018 to 2019 tax year.

Category letter	£116 to £162 a week (£503 to £702 a month)	£162.01 to £892 a week (£702.01 to £3,863 a month)	Over £892 a week (£3,863 a month)
A	0%	12%	2%
B	0%	5.85%	2%
C	N/A	N/A	N/A
H	0%	12%	2%
J	0%	2%	2%
M	0%	12%	2%
Z	0%	2%	2%

Example: If you're in Category A and you earn £1,000 in a week you'll pay:

Nothing on the first £162 =	£0
12% on your earnings between £162.01 and £892 =	£87.60
2% on the remaining earnings above £892 =	£2.16 +

This means your National Insurance payment will be **£89.76** for the week.

Please refer to www.gov.uk/national-insurance-rates-letters for more information.

Where can I view the salary scales?

Please refer to the HR website: <http://bit.ly/HighlandCouncilHRPortal>

Backdated Pay and Universal Credit

Universal Credit payments may stop or reduce

If you receive Universal Credit the amount you get changes if your take-home pay changes. This includes awards of backdated pay. If you get additional pay within a Universal Credit assessment period (month), your Universal Credit payment will either be less than you normally receive or your income may be too high to qualify for a payment.

Universal Credit is calculated on your personal circumstances. Because of this we, as your employer, do not know how, or if, you may be affected.

The 2018/19 Local Government pay settlement was agreed on 1st March 2019 and is scheduled to be in place and paid with a backdated award in March. This increase together with the backdated payment means you will either receive less Universal Credit than normal or you may even earn too much to qualify and your Universal Credit claim will close. If your claim closes, you will see a message on your UC Journal telling you about this.

Will Universal Credit payments start again automatically?

No. If Universal Credit payments stop because you have had additional pay, you must start up your claim again. You should do this as soon as you can to make sure you do not miss out.

How Do I Reclaim Universal Credit?

Log into your UC journal and select the “Reclaim” tab. You will find this at the bottom of the screen. This will take you to a new screen where you will be asked to answer a few simple questions. If you have any problems doing this, contact your Work Coach or visit your local Jobcentre Plus.

You can get independent help and advice about Universal Credit from the Council’s Welfare Support Team either by email at:

welfare.support@highland.gov.uk or by phoning **0800 090 1040**. Alternatively, your local Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to assist.

You can access your UC Journal at:

www.gov.uk/sign-in-universal-credit

An overview of Universal Credit can be found at:

www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in Highland Council

The Highland Council's commitment to Modern Apprenticeships continues at pace with over 110 new apprenticeship starts in the last 16 months.

These include IT, Civil Engineering, Early Years Practitioners, Quantity Surveyors, Joiners, Electricians, Painters, Plumbers, Mechanics and Business administration opportunities as well as many more.

More exciting opportunities are coming soon and this year the Council will be looking for more Early Years Practitioners, Building Standards Surveyors, Business administrators.

In November 2018, the Inverness Housing Management Team appointed Joe Tuddenham as our first Modern Apprentice Housing Management Assistant. Joe, a school leaver from Inverness, is being supported by an in-house assessor, internal verifier and a mentor. In addition to the Modern Apprenticeship, Joe is also working on a Chartered Institute of Housing level 2 award in Housing Practice.

A Modern Apprenticeship was the preferred option to fill this vacancy in terms of workforce planning and increasing educational standards and qualifications within the housing section. In preparation for the

appointment, the team created a training framework using existing, experienced staff to support Joe through the 2 year Modern Apprenticeship and at the same time helping them gain their own qualifications.

A significant commitment has been made by existing staff to allow this to happen and it is hoped that this will pave the way for many more similar appointments.

Anyone interested in a Modern or Graduate Apprenticeship this year should keep a look out on:

www.myjobscotland.gov.uk and

www.apprenticeships.scot

where they will be advertised.

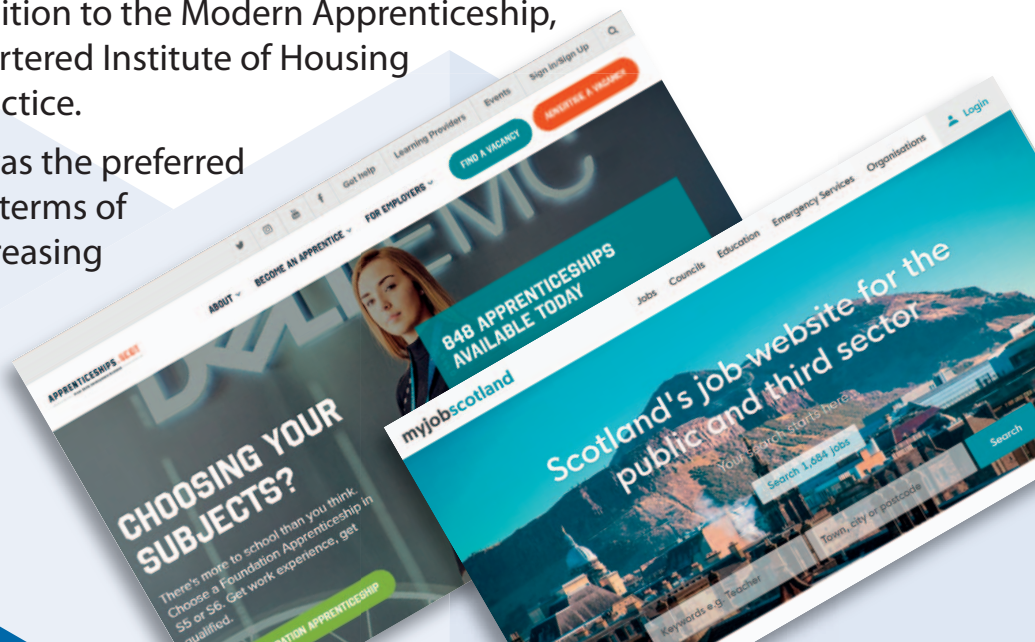


Photo of Joe Tuddenham by The Highland Council

Presentation of TU Health and Safety Diplomas to Highland safety representatives

Sally Bassett (NHS Highland), Johnny Walker (NHS Highland), Davy Macrae (Ambulance Service) and Highland Council employees Liz Mackay, Hugh Gillan, Charles Stephen, and Jamie McPhee met recently in Inverness to be presented with their Health and Safety Diplomas.

Before making the presentation, Councillor Alister Mackinnon and Chief Executive Donna Manson, congratulated them all for their achievement. A further presentation was also made to George Waldron, TUC, Education Coordinator, upon his retirement.

The Highland Council originally launched the Safety Representatives Charter and Partnership Agreement in 2006 which has been recognised nationally as an

exemplar. This highlights the Councils on-going commitment not only to working with Trade Unions to improve health and safety standards, but also to provide tools and training necessary to support staff carrying out these important roles. As well as sitting on health and safety consultative forums they support staff in workplaces and undertake valuable workplace inspections with the aim of improving standards for all.



New Travel and Subsistence Policy

Following work undertaken as part of the Redesign review of the grey fleet, the Council recently approved a new Travel & Subsistence (T&S) policy.

The new T&S policy provides much clearer guidance for managers and staff around the decision making process to be undertaken where travel on Council business is essential. Some of the key revisions and updates to the policy are as follows:

- ◆ **Definition of business travel** – for the avoidance of doubt, the revised policy provides a definition of the types of travel which can be classed as business travel.
- ◆ **Inclusion of Travel Hierarchy / Decision Making Process** – the new policy provides a step-by-step guide for assessing business journeys, whilst promoting and encouraging the replacement of travel with alternatives such as Skype for Business. Additional information is provided about the various preferred alternatives to grey fleet travel, including the car club.

- ◆ **Car Insurance & Vehicle Checks** – the revised policy provides additional guidance in respect of the level of insurance required when using private vehicles for conducting Council business, as well as the checks which should be undertaken in order to minimise risk.
- ◆ **Roles & Responsibilities** – for the policy to be effective, it is important that managers and staff understand their roles and responsibilities in respect of its implementation. This has been clarified within the revised policy.

Given the nature of the services that the Council delivers, there will always be a need for many of our staff to travel. However, the new policy will be a key tool in ensuring that where travel is essential, the safest, most cost effective option is selected and that all non-essential business travel across the organisation is eliminated. There are a variety of savings targets in respect of staff travel within the Council's budget for 2018/19, and it is therefore vital that the new T&S policy is understood and complied with by all staff to ensure these are met.

www.highland.gov.uk/peopleandtransformation/downloads/file/400/travel_and_subsisence_policy

Inside Housing Awards

The recently completed Raining's Stair development in Inverness was entered into the UK-wide award competition run by the widely read and prestigious publication - Inside Housing.

The project was nominated in 3 of the 14 categories winning the award for the Best Residential Development of Under 70 Homes.

The development delivered 16 new flats for affordable rent with funding from the Scottish Government, The Highland Council and Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal.

The project was a successful collaboration between The Highland Council, The Highland Housing Alliance, developer ARK Estates, Trail Architects and Inverness contractor WGC (Scotland)



Photo by Ewen Weatherspoon

Nairn Pontoons

An additional pontoon system has been installed at the very popular and picturesque Nairn Harbour to increase the number of available boat berths. The £600k scheme was jointly funded by The Highland Council and the European Maritime Fisheries Fund.

The additional system was installed by Gael Force Marine and provides an additional 12 new berths which will help meet the high demand for berths at the harbour and reduce the waiting list for boat owners.



Photo by The Highland Council

Awards 2018

A further two buildings in the Highland area won major awards last year:

RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) House of the Year

Lochside House, between Shieldaig and Torridon on the south shores of Loch Torridon, was awarded RIBA House of the Year 2018: the best new house designed by an architect in the UK. The property was chosen from a shortlist of 7 properties.

RIAS (Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland), Andrew Doolan Best Building in Scotland 2018

Nucleus, in Wick, was constructed on a former RAF site by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, and was chosen from a shortlist of 12 designs from across Scotland.

Staff engagement

Employee Engagement Sessions took place across the Highland area over the first 2 weeks in February 2019.

The feedback has been categorised into the 4 Council themes: Efficiency; Commercial and Income; Redesign and Continuous Improvement and Flexible and Well Managed Workforce.

Further work is being developed on an Internal Communications Strategy to continue to engage with staff, to provide opportunities for all staff to take part and to feedback from these sessions.

12 staff engagement sessions were arranged in the following locations: Inverness; Nairn; Kingussie; Fort William; Golspie; Skye; Wick and Dingwall. Approximately 330 staff attended the sessions. This represents 4% of the workforce.

The 2 sessions planned for Wick did not go ahead due to budget issues which cropped up at short notice. The Chief

Executive, Interim Director of Care and Learning and Interim Head of Children's Services committed to visiting Wick in March to meet with social work and social care staff.

The Chief Executive, Interim Head of Education and HR have attended separate Head Teacher briefings which took place late January.

Content covered the key corporate messages of changing culture and attitudes, developing a flexible workforce, vacancy controls, resource allocations, managing absence, redesign, being more efficient and budget responsibilities.

The format and content of the briefing has been well received, placing staff at the heart of the organisation, focusing on staff achievements and investment the Council has made recently in office accommodation, as well as the wider infrastructure of the Highlands. There has been an appreciation of explaining the budget position directly to staff in simple terms, being open about what the challenges are for the Council and how staff can contribute to this going forward.

Summary of Key Themes from Staff Engagement Feb 2019

A full set of questions and answers will be published on the intranet.

Efficiency

ICT

Need for reliable ICT to support a flexible workforce.

Share VC facilities with UHI.

Travel

Need more Enterprise Cars in rural areas.

Staff need to build up confidence in using Enterprise Cars.

Staff submit travel requests to travel desk well in advance to achieve best deals, require travel desk to act on these and important travel desk staff are familiar with efficient options to minimise travel costs.

Budget Coding

Needs to be accurate to provide meaningful Management Information and decrease in correcting errors.

Accommodation

Long term strategy for office moves to minimise costly short term movement of staff.

Open plan offices most conducive to flexible working.

Registers

A record of Speed Traffic surveys should be developed to reduce need for repeated surveys.

Redesign

Improve working practices

More partnership working eg sharing reception duties with HLH.

Train more LEAN Practitioners out with HQ.

Access advice on housing, debt and welfare in one location.

Encourage individual and teams to share their good practice across the organisation.

Income and Commercialism

Assets

Use Council land for advertising.

Explore where Council buildings can have solar panels installed to generate electricity.

Enterprise Cars

Hire out cars to staff at weekend for personal use to make income.

Car Parking

Staff parking charges should be applied in a fair and consistent way across the Highlands.

Tourist Levy

Income from tourist levy should be re-invested locally.

Improve Recycling

Potential to salvage furniture taken to the recycling centre and not needed by Home Start to avoid going into landfill.

Flexible Workforce

Training and Upskilling Staff

Training and upskilling available to staff to develop a flexible workforce. Engage managers fully in this process to properly plan the approach to meet organisation's needs.

Support Modern Apprenticeship approach.

Upskill where shortages currently identified eg HGV drivers.

Budget training and clear understanding for budget holders.

Skills Database

Develop a corporate skills data base which can be used to identify staff skills.

Improve Working Practices

More cross service working and shared resources.

More local jobs advertised with a flexible base. Internal voluntary transfers for staff to work closer to home or use flexible working arrangements.

Absence Management

More support required to manage staff absence.

Energy Efficient Scotland

OUR VISION BY 2040 OUR HOMES AND BUILDINGS ARE WARMER, GREENER AND MORE EFFICIENT

£2.5 billion

is spent every year on heating and cooling the buildings that businesses, public services and households use each day.



Are you interested in making your home or business more **energy efficient** by saving money and the environment?



www.highland.gov.uk/energyefficientscotland