

# In Brief

Corporate Communications for staff

# Gu Geàrr

Conaltradh Corporra do luchd-obrach

- ◆ Rare views from Nairn Courthouse
- ◆ Improved financial position
- ◆ New structure to establish strong foundation for change
- ◆ Social Work staff visits
- ◆ Best Value Assurance Report
- ◆ Education Transformation programme
- ◆ Interim Posts - Care and Learning
- ◆ Suicide Intervention Prevention Programme and App
- ◆ International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia
- ◆ Equally Safe at Work
- ◆ Community Benefit Role

# Rare views from the steeple at Nairn Courthouse

The ongoing refurbishment works of Nairn Courthouse steeple have afforded the opportunity to examine the historic steeple close-up and to take in the expansive views over Nairnshire.

The £809,000 project at the Category B listed Court House involves the renovation of the steeple built in 1860, as well as internal and external works to the building which dates back to 1818 on the site of the old toll booth. The Service Point and the Council offices will remain operational throughout the 48 week programme, due to complete in early 2020.

Photo: Chair of the Nairnshire Committee Cllr Tom Heggie visited the works with The Highland Council Project Manager Laura Burns and LTM Site Manager Raymond Cameron.



Photos by Ewen Weatherspoon

## Actions taken have improved financial position

The actions taken to reduce spending have resulted in a greatly improved financial position. The final outturn for the year is an overspend of £2.280M. This reflects a substantial improvement by reducing the forecasted overspend of £5.550M by £3M.

Strong governance, vacancy management and expenditure controls have not been easy, but have been essential to bring us back into a more stable position. Everyone has had a part to play in this and staff are to be commended for their help in delivering this more positive position. This outcome demonstrates the importance of steps taken at an early stage to address and correct what was a worsening position at the time. This has saved the Council £3M.

The overspend has been mostly offset by a review of earmarked reserves and net income so that just £0.637M has been used from the general reserve fund which now stands at £7.925M.

We will need to continue to keep on top of this as there will be further risks and challenges in the year ahead. There have been meetings with all of the Council's budget managers and we will be continuing to monitor the budget on a weekly basis.

## Structure to establish strong foundation for change

Feedback from both staff and communities tells us we should have structures which work for all the local areas and improve communication both across the organisation and with our local communities.

A new structure of the senior management of The Highland Council was approved by Council on 9<sup>th</sup> May and this will be implemented over the next few months.

The new structure will help the council to deliver its vision and objectives and achieve better outcomes. This will be a process and this will involve developing talent and leadership within the council and help to increase our community capacity and partnership working is set to establish strong foundations for the transformation of the council over the coming months and years. The new senior team will each have responsibility for a geographical area which will help to enhance local visibility and enable us to become

better connected to communities at a local level.

Recruitment to first new Executive Chief Officer posts will commence this week and the new senior structure should be in place by the end of the year.

The Executive Chief Officer (ECO) posts will be as follows:

- Resources and Finance
- Performance and Governance
- Customer and People
- Education and Learning
- Health and Social Care
- Property and Housing
- Infrastructure and Environment
- Transformation and Economy

Transitional arrangements, where required, will be put in place to manage the change in a safe and effective manner. Regular communication will be made available to keep you all updated on developments.

*Donna Manson*  
Chief Executive

## Social Work staff visits

During May, the Chief Executive Donna Manson has been visiting Social Work staff at various locations across the Highlands. On Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May, she visited groups of staff

in Thurso and Wick accompanied by Cllr Linda Munro (Chair of the Corporate Parenting Board), Karen Ralston (Interim Head of Children's Services) and Ruth Cleland (Communications and Resilience Manager).



26 Social Work staff gathered in Thor House, Thurso. Staff from the Respite Service, and from Avonlea and Gable House Residential Units attended (pictured above). With around 500 years of service between them, they chatted about a range of matters including training, travel, education and mental health. Flexibility around training arrangements and more local delivery of training were discussed. Education and mental health issues were highlighted as key priorities for local children, as well as the importance of bereavement counselling.

The next visit was to Airport House in Wick to meet the youth Action Team and Children's Service Workers (CSWs). The teams work hard to provide stability, support and education for children and young people, some of whom are on formal Attendance Orders. The staff explained how many young people come to enjoy their time at Airport House so much they don't want to leave. One CSW said:

**"If you believe in someone, they can really achieve"**

A positive and "can do" approach was clear despite dealing with limited resources.

Staff from Criminal Justice Work explained their work with offenders and the challenges they face. They described a very good partnership with courts, police and other agencies. There are considerable addiction and mental health issues in the community and the need for enhanced local mental health and psychology services, as well as transitional rehabilitation services for those moving on from compulsory attendance orders, was discussed. Literacy classes, community payback and other rehabilitation services take place in the centre. There is a large workshop and a small communal area, but space is an issue and the team is also hoping to start a Father's Group.

The Community Payback Officer described some of the Payback work which provides useful help for community projects and helps with community integration, especially where the members of the community also help in the work. Many of the projects have resulted in a real sense of purpose and ownership for those involved.

Donna reflected on the visits saying:

“The positivity and dedication of all the staff I have met has been incredibly inspiring. We have learnt so much from talking to staff on these visits. I have noted some key areas where we need to focus on and change or improve. There is a huge amount of knowledge and good practice which we can use to help us make improvements which can make an enormous difference to people’s lives and wellbeing.”

Photo: Youth Action and CSW Team at Airport House, Wick



Photo: Criminal Justice Service staff in the workshop at Wick.

# Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR)

You may have heard colleagues talking about the Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) and how they have been working with our external auditors recently.

Best Value is a duty all councils have to ensure that there is good governance and effective management of public resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public. BVAR is an external audit assessment of the Council which will run through the summer with a report being published in late autumn 2019.

Our external auditors will be assessing the Council across a range of strategic areas including our vision and priorities, our leadership and governance, and how we manage our finances. They will take a close look at our performance and how this compares to other councils in Scotland. They will also be interested in how we work with our partners, and how we look to continuously improve the services we provide, including our change programmes and processes such as Redesign. They will also evaluate how we engage with our staff and our communities.

This assessment is important to the Council as it assesses how effectively we are using our resources to deliver services efficiently, improve what we do and achieve positive outcomes for people in Highland.

The Council's vision **Ambitious, Sustainable and Connected**

The Benchmarking figures can be found in the latest Highpoints magazine here: <http://bit.ly/HighpointsIssue13>

# Education Transformation Programme

The Education Transformation Programme has the dual purpose of improving outcomes for all children and young people whilst ensuring that resources are used wisely and efficiently.

As a first step, a change team of 5 head teachers has been seconded to the Education Transformation Programme for a year to help embed identified improvements in the education system. The change team will drive improvements by leading families of schools towards equity and excellence which will see schools with similarities effectively working together, offering a much-needed level of support and challenge that we have not had before. In addition, the change team will also support the roll-out of a new comprehensive training strategy for all school based staff and will spend a lot of their time responding to the priorities recently identified by head teachers to improve education outcomes.

## Interim Posts

Following Sandra Campbell's departure from the Council, 3 interim posts have been established.

These are:

- ◆ James Vance,  
Interim Head of Education
- ◆ Karen Ralston,  
Interim Head of Children's Services
- ◆ Allan Gunn,  
Interim Chief Officer Resources in Care and Learning. This new role is to help deliver improvements in budget management, financial controls and governance of the overall Care and Learning budgets, and support the changes required to deliver savings agreed by Council.



# Confidential Waste



You may be aware that there was a recent data breach which involved personal data about Council Service Users being discovered in and around the general waste bins at HQ. This breach has been reported to the ICO and we await their response.

All staff must be aware of your responsibilities in relation to printed paper.

The Data Protection Legislation applies to personal data, no matter which format it is in, and our duties remain until the data has been securely destroyed. It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that we comply with data protection in relation to printed paper. Here are some simple points which you should remember:

- ◆ Office paper should not be disposed of in the red waste bins.
- ◆ If there is personal data either written or printed on office paper, it should be placed in the confidential waste bins provided throughout the building. This applies to scraps of paper and post it notes as well as more formal documents.

- ◆ If there is no personal data the paper should be recycled.
- ◆ It is your responsibility to look at what you're disposing of and put it in the correct bin.
- ◆ Only print if necessary - This will reduce the risk to the personal data as well as reducing the costs to the Council.
- ◆ If you do print, use secure print – This will ensure that personal data is not left on a printer for others to read or to be accidentally removed with someone else's printing.
- ◆ If you find personal data lying on a printer you should either give it to the person who printed it (if they can be identified) or dispose of it in a confidential waste bin.

## What is personal data?

Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual. <http://bit.ly/ICOpersonaldata>



<http://bit.ly/ICOpersonaldata>



# Applause for young apprentices

Three young apprentices were presented with SVQ certificates at the Corporate Resources meeting.

Chair of Corporate Resources, Cllr Alister Mackinnon congratulated the three young apprentices and presented their well-earned certificates. He said: "Today we are delighted to welcome three young people who started their apprenticeship journey in November 2017 and have completed their Scottish Vocational Qualifications and apprenticeship in Business and Administration. Congratulations to Bryony, Ross and Rebecca on achieving these well-earned certificates."

The Highland Council Modern Apprenticeship programme goes from strength to strength with over 120 new apprenticeships starting since Autumn 2017. This is on target to reach 150 by the end of this year. These include, Apprenticeships in Engineering, Early years, Childcare, Civil engineering, project management, Trades, Roads, Housing and several others. Many of these opportunities have been filled by existing staff, as well as new entrants.

Exciting recent developments have seen the expansion of capability to train Early Years Practitioners (EYP) in house. This will lead to the qualification of over 250 EYPs in the coming 5 years, not only supporting the programme but realising significant benefit in return from the Apprenticeship Levy.



The three apprentices (pictured right) are:

**Rebecca Winton** - Business Support (Ruthven House);

**Bryony McDiarmid** - Business support, Care and Learning (HQ); and

**Ross Campbell** - D&I (Leader team).



## Celebrating Staff Success - People and ICT

Congratulations also to two of our HR Officers who have successfully completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Human Resources, studying through UHI.

Marie McKenzie and Lorna MacKenzie have worked hard during their studies and have applied learning from their course in the workplace on corporate initiatives such as peer reviews.

Cllr McKinnon said:

"I am very encouraged staff are embracing the opportunity to develop and train further in their role which demonstrates the corporate ambition of developing a sustainable and agile workforce."

Photo: Marie McKenzie receiving her certificate at Resources Committee.

## Suicide Intervention Prevention Programme (SIPP) training and Prevent Suicide Highland APP

In recognition of the challenge of suicide within the Highland area, the Community Planning Partnership is taking a cross-sector approach and has agreed to focus on suicide prevention, with a commitment to two specific areas of work.

A half day SIPP training is available for staff. This will support staff to be able to help someone who might be at risk of suicide, whether within their role, within the workplace or within the community. For details of dates, venues and to apply, contact:

**rosemary.mackinnon@highland.gov.uk** or  
**high-UHB.healthimprovementtraining@nhs.net.**

As with any workplace training, please ensure you have the agreement of your line manager.

The course can also be delivered in-house to teams of Council staff, any team interested in this approach should contact:

**james.mccreath@highland.gov.uk**

A Prevent Suicide Highland App has also been developed by NHS Highland's Public Health Department and can be downloaded for Apple and Android devices – search for Prevent Suicide Highland.

This provides helpful information for those affected in any way by suicide, contact details for services across the Highland area and allows users to create their own safety plan.

Anyone who would like support in relation to suicide can call Samaritans on **116 123** or Breathing Space on **0800 83 85 87**.



Prevent  
Suicide  
Highland

## International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia

17<sup>th</sup> May was the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia & Biphobia which each year celebrates sexual and gender diversity, and campaigns against the stigma and discrimination still experienced by LGBTI+ people internationally.

The date marks the World Health Organisation's decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

During 2019, we are pleased to offer a number of half day training sessions on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Awareness run by Waverley Care Highland for Highland Council and NHS Highland staff on:

- ◆ Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 9.30am – 12.30pm, Centre for Health Science, Inverness
- ◆ Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1.30pm – 16.30pm, Dochfour Drive Inverness

To book a place contact the Highland Council Learning & Development Administration Team,

**01463 644023** or

Email: **Learning.development@highland.gov.uk**

If you are interested in forming an LGBTI+ workplace forum/group, please contact Louise McGunnigle:

**louise.mcgunnigle@highland.gov.uk** by 31<sup>st</sup> May.

# Equally Safe at Work

The Highland Council is actively participating in an innovative employer accreditation programme, Equally Safe at Work.

The programme has been developed by Close the Gap and aims to support employers to improve their employment practice to advance gender equality at work and prevent violence against women. 75% of our workforce is female, so it is important that this council makes a commitment to gender equality in the workplace, and that we understand and address any barriers and improve our workplace practices.

An all staff survey is open from 20<sup>th</sup> May to 30<sup>th</sup> June. This will help the Council to identify how we can improve work practices and create a more inclusive workplace culture that promotes gender equality.

I would strongly encourage you to complete the survey which can be found via the following link:

[www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BK5WCQT](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/BK5WCQT)

All responses will be completely confidential and will go directly to Close the Gap.

Should you require any further information please contact:

[louise.mcgunnigle@highland.gov.uk](mailto:louise.mcgunnigle@highland.gov.uk) or

[rosemary.mackinnon@highland.gov.uk](mailto:rosemary.mackinnon@highland.gov.uk)



## Highland Council Employee Survey

## Community Benefits Role

Donna Rose has been appointed to a new role with Wipro to work closely with the Council to develop a plan to deliver community benefits.



She says:

"My heart belongs in the Highlands, I am extremely enthusiastic and proud to have been offered this exciting opportunity"

# EQUALLY SAFE

Scotland's strategy for preventing and eradicating violence against women and girls

# The Cycle to Work Scheme is open until 31<sup>st</sup> May 2019

Workplace Bikes offers employees access to a bicycle for travel to and from work. Using salary sacrifice, employees and employers are able to enjoy significant tax and National Insurance savings offering up to 42% off the cost of a bicycle up to the value of £1000.



<https://highlandcouncil.widerwallet.com/login>

Use Employer Access Code: **S612612H**

Helpline: **0800 612 7110**

