

Budget Consultation

Co-chomhairle Buidseit

Message from Council Budget Leader Councillor David Alston



When we started our 3 year budget for 2010/11 to 2012/13, in spring/summer 2009, we estimated that our budget gap was £60m over that period. This level of savings was required as funding for all Councils was reducing as a result of the banking failure and financial crisis facing the country.

Given the significant savings needed, we felt it was important to gather the views of the public on areas where potential savings could be made.

The scale of public engagement

Awareness of the budget consultation was promoted through the Council's press releases and the publicity for the ward forums. This contributed to over 220 separate headlines, editorials and letters in the 12 regional and 2 national newspapers over an 11 week period.

Our consultation used a variety of methods to encourage as many people as possible to take part. From March to July 2010 (excluding the 5 weeks before the UK General Election):

- nearly 1100 people attended 13 ward forums across the Highlands and these were rated positively in feedback from those taking part;
- over 100 people took part in professional and stakeholder forums e.g. Highland Youth Voice, Environment Forum, Economic Forum, Inverness Chamber of Commerce;
- over 40 people with disabilities took part in 4 focus groups;
- over 6400 people viewed the blog in the 11 week period of its run;
- over 400 people sent e-mails;
- over 50 e-questionnaires were submitted;
- over 400 letters and 26 petitions were received;
- 1593 members of the Citizens' Panel (70%) responded to our budget survey.

The response from our new Citizens' Panel was good, providing us with a sense of public mood generally. The other methods we used for gathering views generated over 8000 separate points on the budget questions. These separate comments can be viewed on our website at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/blog> The names of individuals responding are not provided, although groups submitting comments such as Community Councils are identified. The full report showing the analysis of the feedback is also available on the web site.

What difference did the consultation make?

The Council has now agreed a package of savings over the 3 year period, totalling approximately £55m. With £3m-£4m still to be found for 2012/13, the overall level of savings will be broadly in line with the £60m estimated. The table below shows a summary of the total savings agreed.

	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	3 year total £m
Total Savings Agreed to Date	12.053	22.766	20.444	55.263

This booklet summarises what we asked you, what you told us and what savings decisions were made as a result. The public consultation helped us identify where savings could be made but it also highlighted where you felt strongly that savings couldn't be made, for example closing libraries, swimming pools and museums. As a result we went back to services and asked for further potential savings. These, along with the savings identified through the budget consultation, have achieved the total outlined above. The table below summarises how these savings will be made across services.

SERVICE	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	3 year total £m	Savings as a % of Service Budget
Education, Culture & Sport	2.693	7.796	5.828	16.317	7.1%
Joint Committee for Children and Young People	0.759	1.391	0.706	2.856	12.9%
Planning & Development	0.313	0.448	0.375	1.136	18.2%
Social Work	1.828	2.851	4.291	8.97	8.9%
TEC Services	3.420	2.974	2.829	9.223	13.9%
Chief Executive's Service	1.694	2.968	1.681	6.343	24.1%
Finance	0.331	0.443	0.392	1.166	17.8%
Housing & Property	0.535	0.803	0.313	1.651	18.1%
Corporate Savings	0.480	3.092	4.029	7.601	NA
Total Agreed to Date	12.053	22.766	20.444	55.263	11.8%

Being More Efficient

A number of the savings proposals outlined in the consultation document were about us being more efficient in how we run and organise our services. From the consultation you told us we should consider how to organise and run our services better prior to cuts being made. Across a range of consultation questions you reported that better use could be made of Council buildings by several services operating from one premises; that there were opportunities for reducing both councillor costs and staff costs, specifically in management; and that the Council should focus more upon income generation and making the most out of its assets.

You told us that we should consider selling some of our assets to raise additional income and also increase hiring and leasing of Council owned premises in the evenings, weekends and in school holidays. You also suggested that we could sell space to private enterprises within Council buildings to run cafes or shops or sell advertising space. 88% of Citizens' Panel respondents were supportive of the suggestion to sell advertising space.

Council Management

As part of the budget consultation we indicated our intention of continuing to seek reductions in managements costs and posts. A strong theme of the comments received as part of the budget consultation indicated support that Council management be reviewed.

The Council has agreed to reduce management costs and the number of management posts by 22. This will save us £1.3m.

We have also decided to:

- ▶ Adopt the national position on seeking a 2 year pay freeze for all staff and Councillors from 2011-12 (a freeze on teachers pay is awaiting national agreement).
- ▶ Identify savings by rationalising properties owned or leased by the Council – including budgets for rent, rates, utilities, cleaning and maintenance. This will save us £0.680m.

- ▶ Reduce back office staff by establishing a new business support model for administrative and clerical staff. This will save us £2.755m.
- ▶ Generate income by selling advertising and through sponsorship. This will save us £0.050m.
- ▶ Identify further savings from the ICT contract by removing the contingency budget. This will save us £0.600m.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE TAKING PART IN THE CONSULTATION

Budget Summary

While the Council has agreed a package of savings up to and including 2012/13, only a single year budget for 2011/12 was approved by the Council on 10 February 2011. This is because the Council's grant settlement from the Scottish Government was for one year only, 2011/12, and there remains uncertainty on the funding prospects beyond 2011/12, until the conclusion of the Holyrood elections in May this year, and subsequent budget decisions by the Scottish Government in the Autumn. It is currently estimated that further savings of £3m-£4m still require to be found for 2012/13, but that will only be clarified once the grant for that year is known.

The 2011/12 budget agreed by the Council was as follows.

	BUDGET 2011/12 £m	INCREASE/ DECREASE () £m	INCREASE/ DECREASE () %
Education, Culture & Sport (including Gaelic)	235.747	(4.398)	(1.8)
Joint Committee for Children and Young People	23.079	(1.215)	(5.0)
Planning and Development Service	8.291	(0.714)	(7.9)
Social Work Services	106.556	(0.605)	(0.6)
TEC Services	62.799	(1.911)	(2.9)
Chief Executive's Service	23.405	(3.627)	(13.4)
Finance Service	6.580	(0.114)	(1.7)
Housing Benefits	0.371	-	-
Housing & Property Service (including Building Maintenance)	9.258	(0.838)	(8.3)
Service sub-total	476.086	(13.422)	(2.7)
Joint Board Requisitions (Police, Fire and Valuation)	56.760	(0.828)	(1.4)
Loan Charges	57.544	2.000	3.6
Interest on Revenue Balances	(0.180)	-	-
Sub-total	590.210	(12.250)	(2.0)
Affordable Housing (council tax contribution)	2.600	0.032	1.2
Non Domestic Rate Reliefs	0.560	0.100	21.7
Corporate Savings (still to be allocated to Services)	(1.240)	(1.011)	439.6
Centrally held pressures provision (plus further £3.9m allocated to service budgets above)	7.010	3.419	95.2
Total Revenue Budget	599.140	(9.710)	(1.6)

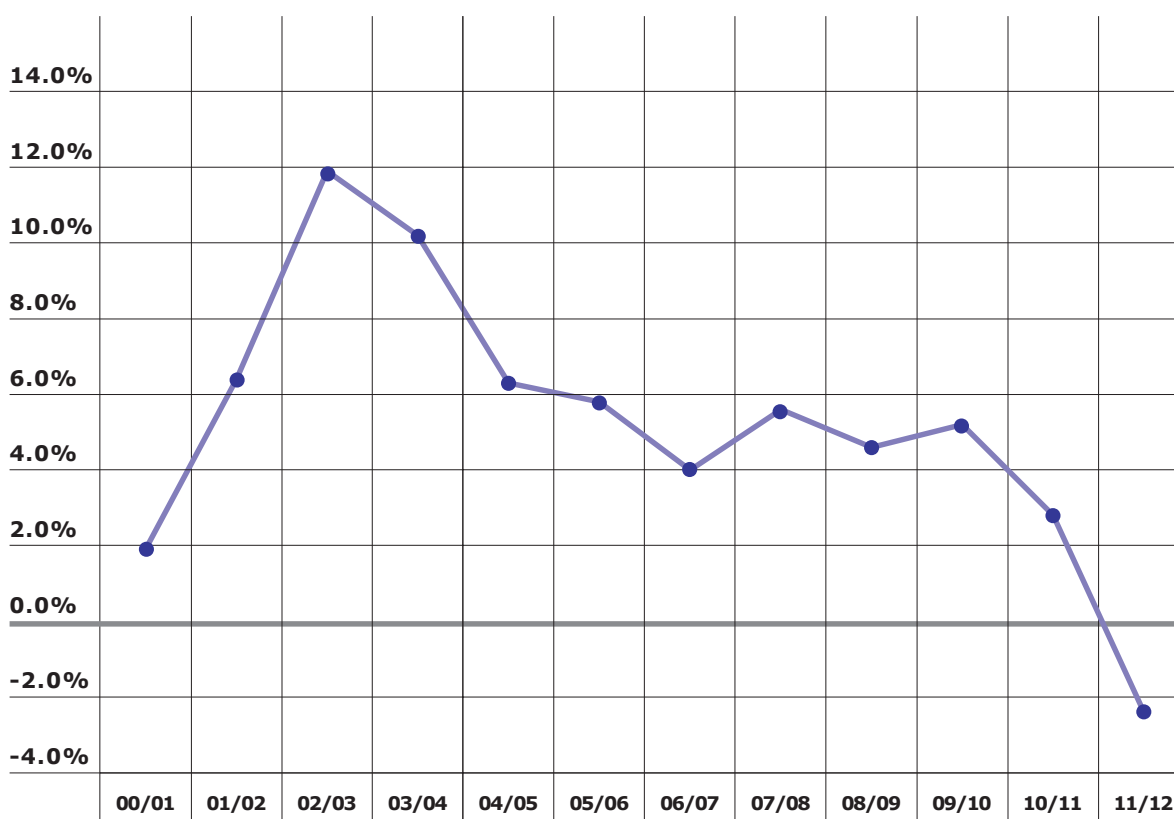
Within the budget, £10.9m has been provided to deal with budget pressures, including increasing elderly demographics, the costs of running new schools and facilities, and provision for inflationary price increases on goods and services. With inflation levels continuing to rise, a challenge for the Council will be addressing cost rises from within the budget agreed, particularly in areas such as fuel and energy costs where prices are rising significantly higher than CPI inflation levels.

Sources of funding for the Council's Budget

	2010/11 £m	Proportion of income
Scottish Government funding	490.359	81.8%
Contribution from balances	0.344	0.1%
Total Amount Needed from Council Tax	108.437	18.1%
Total	559.140	-

The following graph gives a trend of Government grant funding for the Council over recent years. This demonstrates the falling level of revenue grant the Council has received.

Revenue Grant % Changes



Balances

The Council holds reserves and balances, to provide a contingency to meet unforeseen events not covered within the budget. Examples of use of balances in previous years includes meeting additional costs relating to severe winter weather, and flooding events. Balances have also been used to provide for demand led service pressures, particularly in areas such as care for the elderly, and children's placements.

It is important to note, however, that balances can only be used once and when they are depleted, actions must be taken to reinstate them. At present the level of non-earmarked balances held (the general contingency) is projected to be c£13m by the end of March 2011, which is approximately 2% of the Council's budget. This is less than the level the Council would wish to retain as a contingency, which is 3% (£18m).

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LOOKING AT OUR COMMUNITY FACILITIES

SCHOOLS

What we asked you

We asked if we are running too many schools or, as an alternative to reducing the number of schools, should we run the same number of schools but with 12% less in real terms for each school? We wanted to save £1.5m.

Over 220 separate comments were received and questions on this were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation you told us there was support for the proposal to reduce the number of schools rather than reducing school budgets overall. This included 75% of respondents to the Citizens' Panel survey. You told us that resources were already limited and that there was concern at the potential educational impact should budgets be reduced.

There was strong support for clear criteria to be used in order to identify which schools should be amalgamated. The most important factors from Panel respondents were the number of pupils in relation to the size of the building, whether the building is fit for purpose and the demographic profile of the area. You also told us that travel time to the nearest school and the availability of alternative transport were important. There were differing views whether amalgamations should be targeted within rural or urban communities.

What we will do

A full review of the Highland School Estate has been instigated. The aim of the review is to develop the school environment to sustain and improve educational provision and not to identify savings. A range of 11 indicators have been developed to support the review which include:

- ▶ The condition of the building
- ▶ Pupils have the opportunity to engage in the widest range of activities including music, sports, drama and art
- ▶ Pupils should not ordinarily be required to travel for longer than 30 minutes from home to school (primary) or 45 minutes (secondary)
- ▶ Implications of school location to communities should be considered

This will be an ongoing review, area based and located around associated school groups.

CARE HOMES

What we asked you

We asked whether we should continue to run care homes ourselves. We wanted to save £2.9m.

200 separate comments were received and questions on this were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, views were split regarding whether the Council should continue to run care homes. Many of you told us that the private sector were not considered good value for money and that the standards of care were not the same. You also felt it was important that people were able to remain within their own communities and that care homes should be run for the good of the community and not for profit. However, many of you also told us that it wasn't important for the Council to continue to run homes, noting that the majority are already run by independent sector providers. It was also felt that Council homes were not good value for money. You told us that as long as the quality of service and standards are maintained, it did not matter who provided the service. If there was a choice, people felt that it was important to continue running care homes in rural areas where there were no alternative facilities.

What we will do

We have decided not to make savings from out-sourcing care homes. The Council is continuing to progress the replacement of homes in Tain and Muir of Ord by the private sector, where the Council-owned buildings are not fit for purpose into the future.

DAY CARE

What we asked you

We asked if we could change how we provide day care for older people. This included specifically reviewing the day care facilities at Beechview in Brora, Tigh na Drochaid in Portree and Raasay.

Over 200 comments were received.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that we should consider providing day care in different ways. Many people suggested that we should consider the multi-use of existing premises such as community centres, village halls, libraries and schools. It was felt that making better use of existing premises would mean that the elderly would not be isolated. You also told us that voluntary and community groups could be more involved in providing day care, provided the appropriate support was provided.

What we will do

A review into day care has already begun and savings around £1m have been identified over 2 years. The review will ensure each centre focuses on the needs of elderly people to enable them to remain at home. Reviews will be conducted locally and will involve the reductions in the size of some centres and some closures. Voluntary and community groups will be supported to become more involved in providing support for older people.

STAFFIN RESPITE UNIT

What we asked you

We asked whether we should review the children's respite unit at Staffin with a view to closing it. We wanted to save £0.13m.

19 separate responses were received.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us there was strong support for retaining what is considered to be a valuable local facility for vulnerable children and their families. It was suggested that if there are low levels of usage, consideration should be given to extending the facility to others in Highland or outwith Highland.

What we will do

We will continue to run the respite unit at Staffin.

COMMUNITY CENTRES

What we asked you

We asked if we could reduce the support for Community Centres in Inverness by closing 3 or 4 Centres or by reducing funding to all Centres. We wanted to save £0.133m out of the £0.425m annual budget. Around 140 separate comments were fed back and 7 petitions were received.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that there was strong support for the retention of all Inverness community centres. We heard how the Centres are valued and seen as well-used community assets providing for a wide range of people in the community. While the support to keep all Centres open was strong it did not necessarily mean continuation in their current form. Views were offered on how they could be run better and more efficiently, including submissions from some Centres themselves on how they could reduce costs. We also heard that reducing funding was preferable to closure, especially because rural communities do not receive the same level of support and use the village halls model.

What we will do

We will save £0.133m spread over the next 2 years by reducing funding to all Centres. This will include the proposals already submitted by some of those centres.

ARCHIVES

What we asked you

We asked if we should close the Fort William and Portree archives and house these collections in Inverness to save £0.183m from the £1.03m annual budget. Around 70 separate comments were fed back and 1 petition was received for retaining the Portree Archive.

Of all the responses to our consultation, this question generated the most comments from international addresses, from the Highland Diaspora and Clan Associations especially from New Zealand, Australia and Canada. Many local views were recorded too.

What you told us

From the consultation we heard that there were strong views in favour of retaining local archive provision. You told us that archive material needed to be housed in its local context and ideally with links to local colleges. We heard that local collections donated, or promises of donations, would be withdrawn if local centres closed. Strong pleas were made for retaining the archives in Portree, Fort William and Wick.

What we will do

We will spread the reduction in funding across the "spoke" archives in Fort William and Portree and in the hub archive in Inverness. This will result in a saving of £0.060m spread over 2 years; taking only a third of the original saving sought.

MUSEUMS

What we asked you

We asked whether we should retain only Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, only the Highland Folk Museum, or only our support for the independent sector. We sought a £0.400m saving from the £1.5m annual budget. Over 230 separate comments were fed back and 3 petitions were received.

What you told us

From the consultation we heard that all of the museums should be retained. We were told how well valued museums are and of the range of benefits they provide to individuals and to communities (e.g. education, learning, culture, economic and tourism benefits and volunteering opportunities). The national and international significance of some collections were highlighted.

You told us that choosing one closure option over another was too difficult because it was not possible to compare them as they hold different collections, provide different types of services and receive different levels of funding.

Instead of choosing which to retain, most favoured retaining them all by making them financially viable (by reducing costs, changing the business model and generating income) or to make an equal percentage reduction across all museums.

What we will do

We will reduce expenditure across all museums and heritage centres by 15% to avoid closures. This will result in a saving of £0.181m; taking under half of the original saving sought.

LIBRARIES

What we asked you

We asked for views on 5 options to save £0.384m out of the £2.984m annual budget. These options were to close 17 small local libraries, or a major urban library, reducing opening hours, removing 7 school librarian posts and ceasing the Bookstart service for early years.

Around 300 separate comments were fed back and 8 petitions were received.

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What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that closure should be avoided because of the importance of local libraries for communities and culturally. Many people told us how they used and valued their local library service. To avoid closures reducing opening hours and co-locating libraries with other services such as schools and service points were favoured. 77% of Citizen's Panel said they were willing to see a library run in a shared building. Other views included transferring the management to a not-for-profit organisation, charging more for services or using more volunteers. Feedback was less conclusive about removing the school librarian posts and ceasing the early years Bookstart service.

What we will do

We will combine some rural libraries with local facilities (Invergordon with the Service Point and Plockton with the local school library); look to merge school and community library provision; reduce library opening hours; and remove Early Years book fund. This will save £0.131m spread over the next 2 years; taking only a third of the saving originally sought.

SWIMMING POOLS

What we asked you

We asked if we could reduce the number of swimming pools, suggesting the pools in Nairn, Alness and Tain would close if travel time to the nearest pool of 30 minutes was acceptable. A saving of £380,000 was sought from the £1.277m annual budget.

Over 360 separate comments were fed back and 6 petitions were received.

What you told us

The strong message from the consultation was for no pool closures. We heard that the impact of closure on those using the swimming pool, including high achieving swim clubs would be too great. Many told us of the benefit derived from swimming for improved health and well being, water safety and accident prevention, with pool closures likely to displace costs on to other public services such as the health service. Others told us of the wider impact of pool closures in the towns selected, with detrimental impact expected on local economies, on young and old people and for particular communities.

Instead we were told that swimming pools should be run to be more financially viable, with suggestions for increasing income, reducing costs and considering different business models including community run pools with community fundraising or a trust model of management.

What we will do

We will not close any swimming pools.

THE FLORAL HALL, INVERNESS

What we asked you

We asked if the Floral Hall should be closed if more cost effective ways of running it cannot be found. We wanted to save £0.115m, all of the current budget.

Around 50 separate comments were fed back and a petition was received.

What you told us

From the consultation we heard how valued the Floral Hall is for residents, visitors, for people with disabilities trained there and for volunteers. You told us how it promoted horticulture and housed many bequeathed plant collections which would be lost if the Floral Hall closed. We also heard how it could become more cost effective by increasing income, reducing costs or by using a different business model.

What we will do

We will re-tender the café and generate additional income to save £0.026m spread over the next 2 years, taking less than a quarter of the saving originally sought.

PUBLIC TOILETS

What we asked you

We asked if we could reduce the number of public toilets. We wanted to save £0.2m out of a budget of £1.7m.

Just under 200 separate comments were received and questions on this answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, views were split regarding the closure of public toilets. Many of you reported that as provision was already limited, a reduction would not have a significant impact, whilst others that there were already too few facilities available and that people, especially the elderly and tourists, rely on the provision. You told us if closures were to be made, they should be located in areas where alternative provision exists and that we should work closely with business to ensure alternatives are available. It was also suggested that reduced opening hours, increased charges or the facility being run by a community group could be alternatives to closure.

What we will do

We have agreed to undertake a review of public toilets at a ward level. This will consider whether the facility supports tourism, is on a strategic route, level of usage and whether there are alternative facilities locally. This proposal will save £0.325m over 2 years which has been increased to compensate for savings not taken.

TRANSFERRING COMMUNITY LEARNING & LEISURE (CCL) FACILITIES

What we asked you

We asked whether we could consider transferring the running of swimming pools and leisure centres, archives and museums, community centres and libraries to a not-for-profit organisation to reduce costs and avoid some closures. We wanted to save £0.5m.

180 separate comments were received and questions on this were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation you told us that you were generally supportive of the proposal to transfer the running of cultural and leisure services to a not-for-profit organisation as a way of maintaining services within communities. A strong theme was that you did not mind who provides Council services, as it is the service which matters and not the provider. However you told us that it was important that a not-for-profit organisation was used, that the service standards and priorities remain the same and that the public would not experience significant cost increases. You said that it was vital any transfer was cost effective.

What we will do

We have agreed to establish an Arms Length Organisation to run Culture and Leisure services. The transfer will take place in the financial year 2011/12 and includes adult and youth work services, culture, facilities, libraries and sport. This affects over 1,000 Highland Council staff, around 124 properties and an annual budget in excess of £15 million. This will save £1m per year.

LOOKING AT HOW WE RUN COMMUNITY FACILITIES

CARE AT HOME

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we can change how we provide care at home, moving to all services being provided by external organisations. We wanted to save £1.04m.

170 comments were received on this issue and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us there was strong support for changing the way that care at home is provided, as in many areas it is already provided in this manner. On the whole you felt that it was not important who provided the service, as long as the quality and the standard of service was maintained but that it was important that it was cost effective. You reported that staff continuity was important to those receiving care and that the Council may need to continue to provide services in remote and rural areas where there is no alternative provision. Some of you did express concern at the proposal to change service provision, noting that you were satisfied with the way services are currently provided and concerned at the standard of service provided by external providers.

What we will do

The Council is investing more money in care at home services, both through in-house provision and by extending existing contracts with independent sector partners. By also changing the balance of in-house and independent sector provision, we will make savings of around £0.650m, which is less than the original savings proposed of £1.04m, while increasing capacity.

FEWER BIN COLLECTIONS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we can reduce the amount of waste going to landfill by increasing recycling and moving to fortnightly bin collections for other waste. We wanted to save £0.5m

240 separate comments were received on this issue and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were generally supportive of the proposal to reduce the amount of waste and move to fewer bin collections. There was support for fortnightly bin collections but you told us that this should be combined with increased collections for recycling and that you wanted to be able to recycle products such as plastic and cardboard. It was also noted that a number of communities have no recycling facilities at present and a suggestion that within rural communities that community recycling facilities should be improved to enable the recycling of more products.

What we will do

We have decided to introduce alternate weekly bin collections, with residual waste collected one week and recyclable materials the following week. This will be rolled out across Highland by April 2012, and is estimated to save £0.500m.

STREET LIGHTING

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we can reduce our street lighting in Highland. We wanted to save £1.1m.

200 separate comments were received on this issue and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

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What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that of the options provided, you would prefer us to turn off every second streetlight as a way to reducing our street lighting. Overall you were very supportive of the proposal to reduce street lighting, with some of you noting there was no need for street lighting at all especially within rural areas. You did have some concerns however about the extent of reduction in urban areas, the impact on community safety and about the impact upon the elderly, children, deaf and visually impaired communities.

What we will do

We have decided to trial the different options for reducing our street lighting and are consulting on this at a local level. We aim to save £0.500m which is less than the original savings sought.

FACE TO FACE CONTACT POINTS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we can change the way we deal with customer enquires by reducing the number of face to face contact points and increasing the use of telephone and web contacts. We wanted to save £1m.

200 separate comments were received on this proposal and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel. We received 1 petition.

What you told us

From the consultation, your views on this issue were divided. The Panel reported that around two thirds would be happy to utilise the telephone or the internet, however respondents over 65 and those with a disability were less likely to indicate they would use the internet. This was also reflected in the general comments received. Although many of you told us you were supportive of moving to telephony and web services there was concern for the elderly and vulnerable who would be more likely to use face to face services. You suggested that ways to make contact points more affordable could be to combine them with existing services such as libraries or to consider mobile provision alongside the mobile library service. Other alternatives suggested were to reduce the opening hours or number of staff.

What we will do

We have decided to close 4 of the 37 service points and extend the mobile service for 2 communities, to have 3 new partnerships with libraries and 5 with the police and to merge the service point and registration services in 5 communities. Opening hours in certain offices will also be reduced. This will save us £1m.

OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES IN-HOUSE SUPPORTED HOUSING

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we could look to external providers to provide the supported housing service for people with learning disabilities in Inverness. We wanted to save £0.035m.

Few responses were received.

What you told us

From the consultation you told us that it didn't matter who provided the service as long as the service was maintained and the standard and quality of service was maintained. You also told us that if the model worked elsewhere in Highland and was cost effective then this was a sensible approach. You did have some concerns about staff continuity.

What we will do

We are now reviewing the provision of this service in Inverness, and considering the potential for some capacity to be out-sourced. The review will save £0.100m.

OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES CORRAN FERRY

What we asked you

We asked for your views on the long term arrangements for the Corran Ferry service in Lochaber. We wanted to save £0.200m.

17 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided on how to provide the Corran Ferry service in the future. Some of you felt that the service is vital and its removal would have a negative impact upon the community both economically and socially. There were also concerns at the potential impact upon the emergency services. Some of you suggested that the ferry could be replaced with a private vessel on a contract arrangement whilst others that the ferry should be used less often in order to preserve its lifespan.

What we will do

We have decided to wait for the outcome of the Scottish Government's ferries review before considering this matter further.

OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES AM BAILE

What we asked you

We asked for your views on the future of the Am Baile website and whether we should give it to someone else to run or for it to be put on a care and maintenance basis. We wanted to save £0.172m.

45 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided on the future of the Am Baile website. Many of you highlighted the benefits of the resource and that it had won a number of awards. You expressed support for another organisation running the website and that Gaelic or national organisations could be approached. There was a view expressed that this was the responsibility of a cultural body and not the Council. Although there was a general feeling that the site should be put on a care and maintenance basis if no organisation was interested, you did express concerns about its future.

What we will do

We have decided to freeze the development of the Am Baile website. This will save us £0.125m.

OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES EXTERNAL CONTRACTORS FOR GRASS CUTTING

What we asked you

We asked your views on replacing internal seasonal staff employed on grounds maintenance with external contractors. We wanted to save £0.050m.

28 separate comments were received on this issue.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that you were generally in favour of replacing seasonal staff with external contractors given that this model already operates elsewhere in Highland and makes savings. You noted however that it would be important that the quality of the service is maintained and that current employees would not be disadvantaged. The main concern from those of you unsure of the proposal was the impact upon staff and this was also noted by the GMB Union.

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What we will do

We have contracted with an external provider to provide grass cutting in certain areas. This will save us £0.455m each year for 3 years. This saving is higher than at first estimated, and this has allowed us to drop the other savings proposals to review the standards of grounds maintenance.

**OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES
BUGHT NURSERY****What we asked you**

We asked your views on buying plant materials from an external provider rather than providing them internally at the Bught Nursery. We wanted to save £0.100m.

24 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that plant materials could be sourced from an external supplier however this would be on the condition that savings are made but the quality is maintained. You also told us that it was important that no vulnerable groups on employability programmes be negatively affected by this change. You suggested that the Bught nursery could be offered as a social enterprise venture. Some of you also told us that there was no need to continue this service as it was not core Council business.

What we will do

We have decided to explore buying plant materials from external providers. It is estimated that this will deliver a saving of £0.039m, however the actual saving will be determined following the tendering exercise.

**OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES
REPLACING EXTERNAL CONTRACTORS FOR STREET LIGHTING****What we asked you**

We asked your views on replacing external contractors for street lighting with internal staff. We wanted to save £0.050m.

23 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that there was strong support for replacing external contractors with internal staff as long as staff are appropriately qualified and that the standards of service are maintained. It was reported that it was a positive way of maintaining jobs internally. Others were against the proposal noting that external providers tend to be more efficient.

What we will do

We have decided to replace external contractors with internal staff to deliver the street lighting service. This will save us £0.050m.

**OTHER WAYS TO PROVIDE OUR SERVICES
MATERIALS TESTING LAB****What we asked you**

We asked your views on reviewing the in-house materials testing lab with a view to procuring the service externally. We wanted to save £0.050m.

22 separate comments were received on this issue.

continued...

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us there was strong support for reviewing the current provision and procuring the service externally. You noted that it would be important that savings could be made and that standards maintained.

What we will do

We have decided to review the materials testing lab provision. It is estimated that this will deliver a saving of £0.050m, however the actual saving will be determined following the review.

**TARGETING OUR SERVICES AT THOSE MOST IN NEED
YOUTH WORK****What we asked you**

We asked for your views on whether we should reduce the Youth Work service for young people or whether we should reduce and target this on areas of poverty and unemployment. We wanted to save £0.573m.

100 separate comments were received on this issue and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided on the future of this service. Respondents to the Panel favoured targeting the service but the general comments received indicated that you were against a reduction in the service at all. You highlighted the benefits of the service to young people providing support and information and that it helps in reducing anti-social behaviour. You were also concerned that by targeting, young people in need would miss out and this would adversely impact on rural areas. A number of young people responded indicating how valuable they have found the service.

What we will do

We have decided to continue providing Youth Work at present levels.

**TARGETING OUR SERVICES AT THOSE MOST IN NEED
ADULT EDUCATION CLASSES****What we asked you**

We asked your views on whether we should run fewer adult education courses and classes or to focus upon communities with specific needs. We wanted to save £0.050m.

50 separate comments were received on this proposal and questions were answered by the Citizens' Panel.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were unsure whether we should run fewer classes or whether the provision should be targeted, although the Panel were slightly more in favour of a targeted approach. Some of you felt it was important that the service was available for everyone whilst others felt that targeting upon the vulnerable would be more important, although it was noted that remote and rural areas would still require a service. Some of you were completely against the suggestion to reduce this provision highlighting the importance of education for everyone, especially in terms of increased confidence and employability skills.

What we will do

We have decided to reduce adult education courses and classes. This will save us £0.050m.

REDUCING THE SERVICE ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we could reduce our Education Psychologist service by 20% and other areas of Additional Support Needs (ASN) by 50%. We wanted to save £1m.

55 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that you were not in favour of reducing the ASN budget. You were concerned that provision is already limited and under pressure, with waiting lists for services. You reported that any reduction in classroom provision would not only have a negative impact upon the child receiving the service but would impact upon the whole class. Some of you were in favour of a reduction in service but you felt that a smaller reduction would be more appropriate.

What we will do

We have significantly reduced the impact of the savings measures on additional support for learning, and have fully protected educational psychology and other specialist support to schools and pupils. We will carry out a review of classroom support in the primary sector.

REDUCING THE SERVICE FOSTERING AND ADOPTION

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we could reduce the overall fostering and adoption budget. We wanted to save £0.100m.

22 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided on the proposal to reduce the fostering and adoption budget. Some of you disagreed that a service to a vulnerable client group should be reduced whilst others that the minimal savings achieved did not justify the impact on the service. Some of you did support a reduction in budget but felt any reduction should be minimal.

What we will do

We have decided to maintain the budget for Fostering and Adoption at current levels.

REDUCING THE SERVICE REVIEW STANDARDS OF ROAD MAINTENANCE

What we asked you

We asked for your views on whether we could reduce the level of road maintenance. We wanted to save £0.400m.

49 separate responses were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation you told us that on the whole you were against reducing road maintenance. You reported that road surfaces were already of a poor standard and the harsh winter had exacerbated these problems. You were concerned that reductions could be dangerous for road safety. Some of you suggested that road maintenance could be provided by an external organisation at lower costs. Whilst most of you were against reducing road maintenance, you were supportive of reducing cutting grass verges reporting that this was for aesthetic purposes only.

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What we will do

We have decided not reduce the level of road maintenance. The level of investment in roads and winter maintenance will increase by £2m for £2011/12, with additional funding from the Scottish Government of £1.656m and £0.344m from Council budgets.

**STOPPING THE SERVICE
SPORTS AND PLAY DEVELOPMENT****What we asked you**

We asked for your views on whether we should continue to provide support for sports development and also for play development. We wanted to save £0.138m.

47 separate comments were received on this issue, a number from organisations specifically involved in coaching.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us there was strong support to continue supporting sports development. You told us that many sports clubs rely on volunteers and without Coaching Highland, many would be unable to continue if they couldn't access support for training. You highlighted the significant health and wellbeing benefits achieved through involvement in sport and concern that clubs may have to charge and become more elite should support for volunteers not be continued. Some of you were in favour of stopping support, but this, on the whole, was for play development.

What we will do

We have decided to continue to support sports and play development.

**STOPPING THE SERVICE
REVIEW FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CULTURAL AND SPORTING EVENTS
AND FESTIVALS****What we asked you**

We asked for your views on whether we should cease support for cultural and sporting events and festivals. We wanted to save £0.509m.

33 separate comments were received on this issue.

What you told us

From the consultation you told us you were divided in your views on supporting cultural and sporting events. Many of you reported the benefits these events bring to business, the local economy and the increase in tourism that such events generate. Alternative suggestions to ceasing support completely included reviewing current support and providing only where there is clear benefit for tourism, demonstrable community development or opportunities for income generation. However there was the view that the Council should not be supporting such events and that cultural events should be funded by an appropriate private or community organisation, that there was alternative funding out there for such events and that successful events should be self-sustaining.

What we will do

We have decided to continue support for cultural and sporting events but will remove £0.200m from the Highland Cultural Fund.

STOPPING THE SERVICE LONG TERM CARE AT THE ORCHARD

What we asked you

We asked for your views on stopping to provide long-term care for children with disabilities at the Orchard. We wanted to save £0.150m.

16 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided on whether to stop providing long-term care at the Orchard. Some of you were against the idea on principle that services for children with disabilities should not be stopped while others felt that it would result in children having to leave the Highlands. An alternative view was that there should be more focus on maintaining people within their own homes.

What we will do

We have decided to continue providing long-term care at the Orchard.

STOPPING THE SERVICE EDEN COURT

What we asked you

We asked your views on the Out of Eden drama provision provided by Eden Court and whether we could remove this provision. We wanted to save £0.195m.

48 separate comments were received on this issue, including a detailed representation from Eden Court.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that you were against the removal of this provision, outlining the significant benefits this provides to young people across Highland. The importance of drama was highlighted and concern that the lack of this service could negatively impact upon the futures of young people should they be unable to access Higher drama. Some of you did feel that drama provision was a luxury and that perhaps there were more effective ways to provide this in the future. Eden Court in their response outlined a number of alternative ways of saving money rather than stopping to provide the service completely.

What we will do

We have decided to retain the Out of Eden provision and instead make savings in the budget as suggested by Eden Court. This will save £0.030m, which is £0.165m less than originally proposed.

STOPPING THE SERVICE PEST CONTROL FUNCTION

What we asked you

We asked your views on stopping to provide a pest control service. We wanted to save £0.095m.

27 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that we should stop providing a pest control service. It was felt unfair that the service was not uniform across the whole of the area. You were concerned however at the impact upon people on low incomes and how they could be supported to access the service in the future.

What we will do

We have decided to stop providing a pest control service. This will save us £0.095m.

STOPPING THE SERVICE UNADOPTED ROADS

What we asked you

We asked your views on removing the budget allocated for carrying out minor repairs on unadopted roads. We wanted to save £0.050m.

24 separate comments were received on this issue.

What you told us

From the consultation, your views were divided on this issue. There was concern at the impact this could have on vulnerable people and that it could be essential on medical grounds. However, the alternative view was that people who live on unadopted roads should take responsibility for their upkeep.

What we will do

We have decided to remove the budget for unadopted roads however the Directors of TECS and Social Work will work together to deal with any exceptional situations in relation to maintaining road access for vulnerable people. This will save £0.050m.

LOOKING AT HOW INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES CAN CONTRIBUTE

WHAT MORE COULD INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES DO FOR THEMSELVES?

What we asked you and what you told us

In our consultation we wanted to know if there was willingness for more volunteering, whether levels of funding for some voluntary groups should reduce and if people were prepared to accept charges for services. We asked these questions as alternatives to reducing some services. We asked the Citizens' Panel and others for their views.

We asked questions about volunteering because we know that there is a culture of volunteering in the Highlands; our most recent survey results tell us that around 1 in 3 adults say they volunteer, with nearly half of them involved in more than one voluntary activity and nearly 3 in 4 volunteer several times a month. Volunteering appears to be more prevalent in our rural communities.

From general feedback (over 200 comments), on the principle of communities doing more for themselves, we heard a range of views including: some people and communities don't have capacity to do any more; that the Council should just do less anyway; that we should accept that more will have to be done by volunteering; that volunteering should be encouraged; that volunteering should be supported more by the Council and other bodies such as Community Councils.

What we will do

The Council, along with NHS Highland, has decided to develop a joint strategy to support volunteering in the Highlands, and has also decided to enhance the support that it provides to community and voluntary groups to enable volunteering activity.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE STANDARDS AND STREET CLEANING STANDARDS

What we asked you and what you told us

When we asked specific questions in our consultation about whether communities could take on more responsibility by volunteering to keep their environment clean and tidy, most said 'yes' (82% of the Citizens' Panel).

We then asked the Panel if the Council should provide certain services less often or if by doing this community volunteering could fill the gaps. We asked this for 4 services: maintaining flower beds, grass cutting, cleaning play areas and picking up litter. The majority view (around 3 in 4 surveyed) was that maintaining flower beds, cleaning play areas and picking up litter could all be done less often with the community filling the gaps by volunteering; however for grass cutting, the majority (58%) said the service could just be provided less often. Fewer (42%) said that the community could fill the gaps for grass cutting.

We asked others further questions on whether we can reduce the **frequency of grass cutting and the number of flower beds** to save £0.5m out of the £4.3m annual budget. The feedback showed that both services should be reduced; especially grass cutting as that this would support wildlife better, and that lower maintenance shrubs, perennials and wild flowers should be selected for flower beds. Comments in support of communities taking over responsibility for flowerbed maintenance were made.

Sufficient savings will be made from the contracting out of grass cutting to avoid reducing standards in grass cutting and flower bed maintenance; however further work is not ruled out if a reduction in standards might lead to environmental benefit or increased community contributions.

We asked others further questions on whether **street cleaning standards could be reviewed** to save £0.5m out of the £3.9m annual budget. Concerns were fed back on this proposal, primarily because there were doubts that anyone else would do it leading to public health issues and negative views of a community's worth. A stronger preference was made for increasing enforcement and fines for those littering.

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What we will do

We have extended our current commitment on environmental cleanliness by supporting zero tolerance on littering and fly tipping. In order to meet the budget savings targets, the full saving of £0.500m will be made, spread over 2 years from 2011-12.

REDUCING FUNDING FOR SOME VOLUNTARY GROUPS AND SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Given the scale of funding reductions for the Council, we asked whether some of the savings required should be met from the budgets supporting voluntary organisations. We asked about three types of support.

REDUCTION IN GRANTS TO SOCIAL ENTERPRISE GROUPS (RE-USE AND RECYCLING SCHEMES)**What we asked you**

We asked about a 10% reduction in funding for 7 social enterprise groups involved in local re-use and recycling schemes to save £0.055m from an annual budget of £0.550m.

Around 20 separate comments were fed back, mostly from individuals and from Community Councils.

What you told us

Those in favour of a 10% reduction told us that it was fair for all organisations to share budget reductions, voluntary organisations should try to be as efficient as possible and Council support could be targeted to set up these services only, and for them then to be self-sustaining. Others disagreed and told us that these services were valued and already use volunteers so costs are already reduced. Some told us funding should be increased and not reduced.

What we will do

We will reduce the budget by £0.255m, a 46% reduction, which has been increased to meet the budget target over the 2 years.

REVIEWING THE LEVEL OF GRANT TO COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SCHEMES**What we asked you**

Reviewing the level of grant to community transport schemes to save £0.050m out of an annual budget of £0.500m.

What you told us

Over 20 comments were fed back from Community Councils and individuals. They were mixed. We heard that this was a vital service especially for older people, poorer people and people with disabilities and instead of reducing funding it should be increased. Others disagreed and told us budget cuts had to be shared and efficiencies should be found.

What we will do

We will reduce funding by £0.125m which has been increased to meet the budget target over the 2 years.

A FURTHER REVIEW OF ECS SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**What we asked you**

We asked for your views on whether we should reduce support for voluntary organisations across the board by 10% or whether we should stop supporting particular organisations or areas of activity. We wanted to save £0.312m.

21 separate comments were received on this issue.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided in your views. Some of you told us that a 10% reduction across all organisations would be preferable, whilst others that this should be targeted on specific organisations, perhaps those that can generate their own income e.g. Eden Court. However you did express concerns at the potential impact upon individuals and communities and that there

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could be a disproportionate effect should even a 10% cut be applied to small organisations.

What we will do

We have decided not to proceed with any reductions in ECS funding to voluntary sector organisations.

PAYING MORE FOR SERVICES

Are the public and users of services able to pay more for the services they receive? With concessionary arrangements and discounts still available, we estimated £3.7m could be saved.

What we asked you

We asked the Citizens' Panel what level of increase would be acceptable to allow the service to continue. Over 70% said an increase of at least 3% was acceptable, around 1 in 5 said 5% was acceptable.

Nearly 150 separate comments were fed back from others on this topic, including from ward forums, Highland Youth Voice, Sight Action and the Deaf Forum, and through internet contact.

What you told us

Those favouring paying more for services tended to qualify this with concerns about ability to pay; suggesting means testing and concessionary rates for older people and those reliant on welfare benefits. Others called for more promotional work to be done to make people aware of concessions available and for that information to be provided in accessible formats, especially for people with sensory impairment.

The most acceptable services to charge more for are car parking and parking permits, public toilets, commercial refuse and additional refuse collections, limiting the High Life Scheme (e.g. removing swimming lessons from the Scheme), school meals, room hire and grass cutting. 87% of the Citizens' Panel agreed the Council should sell advertising and sponsorship space. Other ideas for raising income included selling Council assets, increasing rent and hire costs and admission charges to e.g. museums, community centres and leisure facilities. We also heard that the Council should raise income by generating renewable energy.

Other points made about increasing charging focused on: the level of charging; the need for an open, fair and transparent charging policy; administration costs of charging being proportionate to the income raised; and that particular impacts for private business and rural areas should be considered. Comments were also made in favour of increasing the Council Tax as a way of paying more for services.

Where opinion was against paying more for services a common view was that it did not make sense to do this in a time of recession, with fears of rising inflation and wage reductions. Others felt that services should be funded through the system of taxation and not charges and that they would rather pay more tax.

What we will do

We have decided to increase a range of fees and charges in both 2011/12 and 2012/13. There will be a minimum of a 5% increase but certain charges will be higher. Increased charges will apply to a range of service including car parking permits, registration services, music tuition, school meals and burial and cremation charges. We have also decided to introduce charges in a number of areas including planning, school residence lettings and sponsorship.

PAYING MORE FOR SERVICES MUSIC TUITION IN SCHOOLS

What we asked you

We asked if the fee should be doubled or the service reduced by half. We wanted to save £0.559m out of the £1.8m annual budget.

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We received around 80 separate comments, from a range of groups, musicians and individuals on the reviewing the delivery of music tuition and region-wide music support, along with a petition with 3821 signatories.

What you told us

We heard that music tuition should be retained and not reduced. You told us this service provided personal development, that music education should be seen as important as any other school subject, that it contributes to Highland culture, and with regional successes, including the Highland Young Musician of the Year, it is of national significance. Concern was expressed at the potential loss any reduction in music tuition could bring to the wider music community. We heard that without the Council's service there would be no music tuition available in some communities.

Other feedback included keeping fees at current level but reducing costs of the service by relying more on volunteers. Concerns were expressed too that increasing fees would result in some pupils not being able to afford the tuition. Suggestions on fees included: differential rates; concessions schemes; paying beyond second year in school; rental for instrument hire; raising income through concert tickets.

What we will do

We will increase charges, spread over 2 years from 2011/12, providing a saving of £0.509m, slightly lower than originally suggested.

PAYING MORE FOR SERVICES LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR LIBRARIES

What we asked you

We asked if we could increase charges for library requests or reduce the frequency of the mobile library service. We estimated this would save £0.100m out of an annual budget of £1.278m.

Nearly 30 separate comments were fed back from community councils and individuals.

What you told us

Generally retention of the mobile library service was favoured, although if it was to be reduced to a monthly service for example we heard that people should be able to borrow more books from each visit. Charging for requests was generally favoured, with small charges made for late fees, internet usage of over 30 minutes and some general borrowing. We heard other ideas to reduce costs, including co-locating rural libraries with schools and more use of volunteers.

What we will do

So we will reduce the budget by £0.085m, less than the original saving proposed. This will be done by:

- Removing the housebound service in Inverness – this is the only place in Highland served by such a service
- Reduce the frequency of renewal of public access network equipment
- Remove central school book fund
- Remove a library assistance post at the central unit
- Vehicle and central efficiencies

The saving will be spread over 2 years from 2011/12.

PAYING MORE FOR SERVICES PUBLIC TRANSPORT SUBSIDIES

What we asked you

We asked about reducing the level of subsidy for some rural bus and ferry services where passenger numbers are low, which would either result in some services ceasing or fares increasing. We asked about saving £0.500m from an annual budget of £3.2m.

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What you told us

From the 20 separate comments received (from Community Councils and individuals) little support was expressed for reducing subsidies. Concerns focused on the loss of service affecting remote communities and vulnerable people the most. Others highlighted the potential for further depopulation in remote areas or negative environmental impact from a loss of public transport.

Some respondents proposed alternative ways of reducing the subsidy by making routes more financially viable, for example by better timetabling to increase use, using smaller buses and increasing fares, with some saying they would pay more if the service was more reliable and using income from tourist fares to subsidise the transport routes. Others told us that with inevitable cuts, public transport subsidies would be reduced.

What we will do

We will reduce the funding by £0.500m in 2011 by capping the budget available for bus contracts at the next tender round. We will assess impacts once the tenders are returned in the summer of 2011.

PAYING MORE FOR SERVICES**REDUCED ENTITLEMENT FOR CLOTHING GRANTS FOR PUPILS****What we asked you**

We asked if we could reduce the amount of annual clothing grant from £50 to £30 and move from a cash payment to a voucher scheme. This would save £0.080m on an annual budget of £0.210m.

Over 25 separate comments were fed back from Community Councils and individuals.

What you told us

We heard that the amount of grant should not be reduced. Fears of stigmatisation were voiced not only about the reduction in grant but moving to a voucher scheme.

What we will do

We will not reduce the grant or introduce a voucher system and will retain the current annual budget.

LOOKING AT RESOURCES - STAFFING AND BORROWING

REDUCE STAFF COSTS

REVIEW SECONDARY TIMETABLING METHODS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on changing the average class size in secondary schools for Maths and English from 20 back to 33. We wanted to save £1.791m.

27 separate responses were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that secondary posts could be protected if the savings could be directed elsewhere in schools, with secondary classroom assistants, a pay freeze for teacher and reducing schools management costs all suggested as alternatives. Some of you thought the increase from 20 to 33 was too large and should be limited to 25 or 28, whilst others that the size and context of each school e.g. social deprivation should be taken into account.

What we will do

We have decided to remove the requirement to have class sizes of 20 in English and Maths. This will save us £1.624m, slightly less than the original proposal.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS

REDUCE NURSERY CO-ORDINATOR TEACHERS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the number of nursery co-ordinator teachers to reflect the falling number of 3 and 4 year olds. We wanted to save £0.100m.

24 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that in principle it was reasonable to reduce staffing where the need for nursery education provision was falling. However it was not clear whether those of you responding were currently using the service. Some of you also felt that pre-school provision was important in influencing development and that more information was needed on the impact.

What we will do

We have decided to review the model of Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers, to reinforce the support given to local clusters of services, and to enhance the developmental and support role across all nurseries and early years' partner centres. Along with the anticipated reduction in provision, because of falling rolls in some communities, this will enable savings to be achieved across the sector, of £0.500m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS

PERIPATETIC JANITOR SUPPORT

What we asked you

We asked for your views on stopping to provide a peripatetic janitor service to small primary schools without janitors and having this service provided by our Housing and Property service. We wanted to save £0.287m.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us in general that you supported the proposal to remove the peripatetic janitor service. You felt that as not all schools have access to any provision, then it would only be fair to remove the service and that it could be provided either by teachers or other Council staff. However, some of you were concerned at the impact on small schools, who already have limited resources, and felt that a central service would be likely to be less cost effective.

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An alternative suggestion was to increase peripatetic janitor support and reduce dedicated support to schools.

What we will do

We have decided to continue the peripatetic janitor service.

**REDUCE STAFF COSTS
QUALITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS**

What we asked you

We asked for your views in reducing the number of quality improvement officers in the Education service by 2. We wanted to save £0.140m.

22 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were not clear what the role of the Quality Improvement officer was and a concern at the costs associated with them. You therefore questioned their value. Some of you felt that more information on the impact of losing 2 posts was needed or that no budget reduction should be made in the education service because it should be seen as a priority.

What we will do

We have decided to reduce the number of Quality Improvement Officers by 2. This will save us £0.130m.

**REDUCE STAFF COSTS
REDUCTION IN TEACHING ABSENCE FUNDING**

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the funding for teacher absence cover. We wanted to save £0.047m.

23 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were divided in your views. You were generally concerned about pupils being disadvantaged as you equated a loss in funding with a withdrawal of teacher absence cover as opposed to the reduction in contingency funding anticipated by the proposals.

What we will do

We have decided to reduce the funding for teacher absence cover. This will save us £0.047m.

**REDUCE STAFF COSTS
EARLY YEARS STAFF QUALIFICATION**

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the expenditure to support early years staff achieve qualifications. We wanted to save £0.050m.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were supportive of the proposal to reduce the budget for early years qualifications. You reported that in light of falling rolls, this would seem to make sense. Some of you suggested that staff should be paying for this individually.

What we will do

We have decided to reduce the expenditure to support the early years qualification. This will save us £0.050m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS OVERNIGHT PROVISION IN CHILDREN'S UNITS

What we asked you

We asked for your views on changing the overnight provision in children's units from waking staff to sleepover cover. We wanted to save £0.150m.

12 separate responses were on this proposal.

What you told us

You were supportive of the proposal to change the way overnight provision is provided, noting that if the practice already operates elsewhere in Highland then this model should be followed. You did report that safety issues should be considered prior to implementation and also the needs of individual residents.

What we will do

We continue to work on how we might most efficiently and safely organise the supervision of children's units overnight, and have taken measures to date that will save £0.100m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS BURIAL ADMINISTRATION

What we asked you

We asked for your views to merge the burial administration functions carried out in Kingussie, Nairn and Inverness to the purpose built facility at Kilvean in Inverness. We wanted to save £0.20m.

18 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you were generally supportive of the proposal to consolidate the burial administration function in Inverness. You felt that because this is a service provided mainly to funeral directors and not the bereaved, then consolidating the service in one location would not matter. Some of you noted that it would be important that any change made savings and a suggestion made that for any individual who did require a face to face service, this could be provided at a service point.

What we will do

We have decided to consolidate the burial administration function at Kilvean in Inverness. This will save us £0.020m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STAFF

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the number of Environmental Health staff. We wanted to save £0.060m.

27 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

Views were divided on this issue. Those supporting the proposal tended to do so because they disagreed that it should lead to a reduction in service provision. This was argued on the basis that productivity among those in post should increase or for the remaining resource to be targeted at priorities. Those opposing the reduction in staff and service expressed the value of the service, their concerns especially about food safety standards and thought more flexible work patterns could achieve the saving and retain service levels. Strong representation was made from the Department of Public Health in NHS Highland to retain staffing in food safety.

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What we will do

We have decided to review the number of Environmental Health staff, excluding food safety. This will save us £0.060m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS TRADING STANDARDS STAFF

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the number of Trading Standards staff. We wanted to save £0.060m.

23 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you expressed a range of views on this proposal. Some of you favouring a reduction in staff mentioned two factors for a reduction in staff not leading to a reduction in service: productivity could be increased; and resources could be targeted to priorities. Another view was that the reduction could be made by vacancy management rather than redundancies. Those of you opposing the reduction highlighted the public value of the trading standards service or thought the same level of service could be achieved by more flexible working of all staff rather than reducing the numbers of staff.

What we will do

We have decided to reduce the number of Trading Standards staff. This will save us £0.060m.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS OVERALL STAFFING IN TECs

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the number of staff within the Transport, Environment and Community Service. We wanted to save £0.075m.

24 separate comments were received on this issue.

What you told us

From the consultation, a strong theme was to support the review of staffing overall. You felt that a complete review would be beneficial because it could include a productivity review, allow comparison with the private sector, be more strategic and should cover all Council services and not just TEC services. Some of you expressed views on different staff groups to target, some saw management as top heavy; others thought administration and refuse collection were over-staffed. Another view was that savings could be made by managing vacancies better. Those of you opposing the review either needed to know what the impact on services would be or they valued the current service and could not see how a reduction would allow the service to be viable.

What we will do

We have decided to review the overall staffing structure in TECs. This will save us £0.621m which has been increased to meet the budget target over the 2 years. This will be achieved partly through vacant posts which will minimise the impact on staff.

REDUCE STAFF COSTS BUSINESS PROCESSES TECs

What we asked you

We asked for your views on identifying efficiencies in the business process elements of the Transport, Environment and Community Service. We wanted to save £0.040m.

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18 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that you were in complete support for reviewing business process. You reported that there was a need to be more efficient and to reduce the number of staff. You suggested that this kind of review should be ongoing and should happen across all Council services.

What we will do

We have decided to review business processes across the Council as a whole. Corporate savings for the review of business support are estimated to be £2.755m.

**GENERATE MORE INCOME
SCHOOL RESIDENCES**

What we asked you

We asked for your views on income generating opportunities within school residences. We wanted to save £0.060m.

18 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were supportive of generating income from school residences over the school holidays. You suggested we should target visitors to the area but that there was also potential for courses and conferences. You also suggested that in addition to school residences, class rooms and sports fields could also be hired out over the holiday period.

What we will do

We have decided to explore income generation opportunities from letting out School residences. This will save us £0.050m.

**GENERATE MORE INCOME
INCOME STREAMS TECs**

What we asked you

We asked for your views on review the income streams generated through the Transport, Environment and Community Service. We wanted to save £0.300m.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were in favour of all income streams in TECs being reviewed. You suggested possible income streams related to car parking charges, charging for public toilets and savings relating to fleet costs were also suggested by out-sourcing fleet requirements to a social enterprise, so that fleet was paid for only when in use, and making sure that staff do not use Council vehicles for their personal use. You also suggested cutting budgets for Gaelic signage.

What we will do

We have decided to explore income generation opportunities reviewing burials and cremation charges, harbour dues (excluding commercial fishing), car parking charges and Corran ferry charges. This will save us £0.650m which has been increased to meet the budget target over the two years.

**GENERATE MORE INCOME
REVIEW AIRSTRIPS**

What we asked you

We asked for your views on disposing of the three airstrips the Council currently owns or generating additional income from these. We wanted to save £0.026m.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were generally in favour of selling the airstrips. Some of you noted though that sales should be conditional on their use as air strips being retained in case

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of emergencies, with the Skye airstrip left in Council ownership for medical emergencies. Some of you were also in favour of retaining airstrips and generating income, with suggestions for income including developing them for private aviation use or as space to be hired for driving instruction.

What we will do

We have decided to keep the three airstrips the Council owns.

USE FEWER BUILDINGS

TEMPORARY MORTUARY FACILITIES, GLEN NEVIS

What we asked you

We asked for your views about closing the temporary mortuary facility at Glen Nevis in Fort William. We wanted to save £0.005m.

16 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us that you were supportive of closing the temporary facility and consolidating the service within Belford and Raigmore hospitals. You noted however that it would be important to consider whether the Belford had the capacity to absorb this service provision.

What we will do

We have decided to close the temporary mortuary facility at Glen Nevis. This will save us £0.005m.

USE FEWER BUILDINGS

AMALGAMATION OF VEHICLE WORKSHOPS

What we asked you

We asked for your views to merge the three vehicle workshops for our vehicles at Kingussie, Dingwall and Inverness into one in Inverness. We wanted to save £0.050m.

21 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were generally supportive of the proposal to consolidate the 3 vehicle workshops into 1 central location within Inverness. However, you felt it was important that any change would not impact upon service provision. One suggestion was that for minor repairs the Council could consider using local garages to avoid the additional staff time and transportation costs to get to Inverness. There was concern expressed at the impact this change could have on the Badenoch and Strathspey area especially during the winter months when bad weather could prevent vehicles getting to Inverness to be repaired.

What we will do

We have decided to review vehicle workshop provision. This will save us £0.050m.

USE FEWER BUILDINGS

MATERIALS STORES PROVISION

What we asked you

We asked for your views on reducing the number of materials stores provision and the option to use external suppliers to provide just in time deliveries. We wanted to save £0.075m.

16 separate comments were received on this proposal.

What you told us

From the consultation, you told us you were supportive of the proposal to reduce the number of materials stored and also the use of external suppliers. You noted however that any consolidation and use of external suppliers must not effect the distribution to depots and that any supplier must be able to respond quickly and efficiently. One respondent noted how 'just in time' delivery approach has saved considerable amounts in the care sector.

What we will do

We have decided to review materials store provision. This will save us £0.075m.

ADDITIONAL BUDGET SAVINGS

As outlined at the beginning of this document, following consultation, we decided not to progress a number of the savings originally proposed given the views of the public. However, savings still required to be made and so we sought alternative proposals from services in order to prevent closing swimming pools, libraries, museums and reducing services such as Additional Support for Learning, Out of Eden drama provision and the budget for roads maintenance.

Outlined below is a summary of the alternative savings measures which we have progressed:

Schools

- Reduce management time in primary schools. This will save us £1.093m.
- Reduce the budget for teaching, non teaching and capitation by 2.6% in Secondary and Special schools. This will save us £1.76m.
- Save 5% from Local Authority pre-school units. This will save us £0.216m.
- Reduce the budget for classroom materials and equipment in primary schools by 10%. This will save £0.138m.
- Reduce the budget allocation for teachers' absence cover by 10%. This will save £0.151m.
- Closure of the Plockton school of traditional Scottish music. This will save us £0.317m.
- Review the number of agreed additional posts in primary schools and reduce by 20 FTE. This will save £0.837m.
- Savings from changes to teachers conditions in service. This will save £0.590m

Community Facilities

- Reduce the level of support for Community Centres outwith Inverness. This will save £0.032m.
- Reduce the grants budget for the Highland Culture Fund. This will save £0.200m.

Children's Services

- Looked After Children: Remove the Education link worker posts and mainstream this role and achieve efficiencies through Throughcare and Aftercare arrangements. This will save £0.190m.
- Rationalisation of support provision and childcare grants. This will save £0.100m.
- Change the way intensive support arrangements are provided for Youth Justice. This will save £0.250m.
- Close the Lodge Children's unit. This will save £0.350m
- Reduce the spend on out-of-authority care contracts. This will save £0.600m.

Adult Social Work Services

- Reduce the spend on community care placements. This will save us £0.200m.
- Make efficiencies within Local Authority care homes. This will save us £0.600m.
- Shifting the balance of care. This will save £1.5m.
- Achieve efficiencies from independent care sector contracts. This will save us £0.600m.

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Transport, Environment and Community Services

- Reduce the work undertaken in watercourse maintenance. This will save us £0.100m.
- Improve winter maintenance salt storage and management. This will save us £0.150m.
- Reduce the budget for flood alleviation and for coastal protection. This will save us £0.030m.

Other savings

- Reduction in expenditure on consultants and to external contractors within Planning and Development. This will save us £0.056m.
- Delete the vacant posts of Building Standards inspector in Wick and Professional Standards Officer in Dingwall. This will save us £0.48m.
- Remove community mediation budget. This will save us £0.080m.
- Delete the post of Area Surveyor for Caithness and Sutherland. This will save us £0.038m.
- Reduce printing costs and identify further efficiencies within Planning and Development. This will save us £0.108m.
- Deletion of business support posts within Social Work. This will save us £0.100m.
- Saving of 5% from the Catering and Cleaning budget. This will save us £0.500m.



FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or to request this information in an alternative format e.g. large print, braille, computer disk, audio tape, or suitable language, please contact:

The Policy Team

Telephone: 01463 702006

Email: policy6@highland.gov.uk

These separate comments can be viewed on our website at:

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/news/blog>

The names of individuals responding are not provided, although groups submitting comments such as Community Councils are identified. The full report showing the analysis of the feedback is available on the web site also.