

# HIGHLAND BUDGET CONSULTATION ANALYSIS

## LOOKING AT HOW INDIVIDUALS AND COMMUNITIES CAN CONTRIBUTE

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## **What more could individuals and communities do for themselves?**

### **Quantitative analysis**

We asked the Citizens' Panel about **participation in volunteering**. Around 1 in 3 adults (36% of respondents) say they volunteer, with nearly half of them (49%) involved in more than one voluntary activity and nearly 3 in 4 (74%) volunteering several times a month. There is a rural/urban split and differences by age group in the responses. Further information from this analysis is provided at the end of this section.

We asked:

***“Do you think that communities could take on more responsibility by volunteering to keep their environment clean and tidy?”***

92% of those surveyed responded to this question. Of them:

- 82% said “yes”
- 18% said “no”

There are no notable differences in the answers to this question by the various categories of respondents.

The second question asked:

***“If the Council has to reduce costs, which of the following would be the most acceptable?”***

There then followed a list of four different services each of which had two options attached and respondents were invited one or other of these options – which were “Council provides the service less often” and “Council provides the service less often – community volunteering fills the gaps”.

The first service presented was “Maintenance of Flower Beds”. Some 82% of all those surveyed responded to this part of the question and of them:

- 26% selected the option of “Council provides the service less often”
- 74% selected the option of “Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps”

Support for the leading option “Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps” ranged from 78% of those aged 25-44 to 66% of those aged 75+.

The second service presented was “Grass Cutting”. Some 74% of the sample responded to this part of the question and of them:

- 58% selected the option of “Council provides the service less often”
- 42% selected the option of “Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps”

Support for the leading option “Council provides the service less often” was strongest amongst those aged 65-74 (65%) and those aged 75+ (74%) compared with a narrow majority of those aged 25-44 (51%).

The third service presented was “Cleaning Play Areas”. Some 74% of the sample responded to this part of the question and of them:

- 27% selected the option of “Council provides the service less often”
- 73% selected the option of “Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps”

There were no notable differences in the level of support for these options by the various categories of respondents.

The fourth service presented was "Picking up Litter". Some 75% of the sample responded to this part of the question and of them:

- 24% selected the option of "Council provides the service less often"
- 76% selected the option of "Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps"

Support for those who selected the leading option of "Council provides less, community volunteering fills gaps" was particularly strong amongst those who earlier in the survey reported that they volunteered in one capacity or another. Some 80% of this group supported this option compared with 73% of those who do not volunteer.

Members of the Citizens' Panel were also asked:

***"Can you think of any other types of services that communities could volunteer to take on?"***

Some 23% of the sample responded to this question. The suggestions found in Table 19 below are those which were mentioned by at least 1% of the entire sample.

**Table 19. Services Respondents thought Communities could Volunteer to Take On**

| <b>Services</b>   | <b>% of all Survey Respondents</b> |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Street Cleaning   | 4%                                 |
| Maintaining Public Parks/ Open Spaces   | 4%                                 |
| Winter Maintenance  | 3%                                 |
| Respite Services/ Home Help/ support/ transport/ care for older people/ people with disabilities/ vulnerable families | 3%                                 |
| None  | 3%                                 |
| Handyperson/ Gardening Services   | 2%                                 |
| Libraries   | 2%                                 |
| Museums   | 1%                                 |

N=369

The table shows that the **services most frequently mentioned** are: street cleaning (4%); maintaining public parks/open spaces (4%); and winter maintenance (3%); respite services/ home help/ support/ transport/ care for older people/ people with disabilities/ vulnerable families (3%). Other services to register at the level of at least 1% of the sample were: handyperson/ gardening services (2%); libraries (2%); and museums (1%). It is also noteworthy that some 3% of the sample felt that none of the services should be take on by communities.

A number of the people responding were **enthusiastic about the prospect of communities taking on additional tasks:**

*"I think that the more you, as Highland Council, can put the message out that we've got to pull together as a community then the more people will stop thinking about what they're going to lose in services and start seeing this is an opportunity to serve. There's a whole generation of teenagers - who I work with - who are talented but wouldn't for a moment think they should use these talents or their time to help their*

*community. That's got to change. Let's use the gifts we have in the Highlands, not expecting anything in return, but to serve our community."*

*"In this area community groups already run a number of services provided elsewhere by the council e.g. Leisure centres, community centres, sports facilities, and playing fields. I think that this principal could be extended across Highland. Many active retired people could take on staffing small community libraries; classroom assistant type work; transport to day care facilities; recycling projects; countryside ranger type activities; music and sports tuition."*

As well as indicating what services could be run by communities, **some respondents were ready to suggest ways of enabling the process to happen.** Comments included the following:

*"As well as discussions with the community councils perhaps advertising proposals in local outlets e.g. newspapers magazines etc would prove fruitful."*

*"I believe that you could run a similar scheme to the highlife card, where people could barter their 'volunteered time' for council services e.g. swimming, fitness classes..."*

*"Perhaps a 'days pay' scheme where people donate either a day of their time or a day of their salary to improve the local area, or provide help in some way. Because if everyone is doing something, it removes the stigma of it."*

A number of respondents were **concerned about the implications of communities taking on services even when supportive of it happening in principle.** In their opinion if such services are to be sustainable then they need to be adopted by communities on a truly voluntary basis and not have these services forced upon them. Concerns were also raised about the need for proper management, resourcing and full systems of accountability.

*"Volunteering can be extremely useful but still needs to be co-ordinated and work organised. It would be wrong to rely on volunteering to fill all gaps as it is not guaranteed who may/may not turn up and it also seems to be the same volunteers who get landed with the work."*

*"The council will have to provide incentives if it wishes people to look after their own community, otherwise it will be left to the well meaning among us. While this may work for a while, eventually resentment will set in and volunteering will reduce."*

*"I'm all in favour of communities taking on the provision of services provided they volunteer .. [and] safeguards including accountability are in place. I would be very concerned if communities had a requirement to provide services forced on them. To provide an effective service requires proper resources and sound management."*

Some respondents highlighted the fact that in their communities **much voluntary effort was already underway and they were concerned about the capacity for more to be undertaken.** They said:

*"Volunteers in my area already work very hard - they run village halls, swimming pool, museums, local newsletter, local radio, woodland, allotments, arts groups, community*

*councils, car scheme, children's activities, maintenance of parks, car parks, toilets, benches, notice boards as well as fund raising for many charities especially the Highland Hospice, I feel there is not much else that they could do or should do rather than Highland Council."*

*"Our small community has an amazing group of volunteers. More and more being expected of them. Recent closure of Assynt Centre has pushed more into voluntary work. A small place like this must have its limits. From here it seems that larger communities get much more for nothing, and offer little voluntary help back to the place. These are serious concerns that we will reach breaking point. Volunteer means do it yourself or lose it completely. Then if it doesn't work council can just close it anyway."*

**Other problems which people foresaw** included: whether apathy in some communities could be overcome; the logistics of trying to organise services in Inverness; meeting health and safety requirements; and addressing the need for people to demonstrate competencies to undertake tasks to satisfy regulatory authorities.

Some respondents were **opposed to communities taking on more:**

*"We have councils to do this. People are either too busy or too old/infirm to do the council's work for them."*

*"I do not think that communities should have to volunteer for services that they pay taxes to fund."*

### **Qualitative analysis**

Over 200 responses were received to the question:

#### ***'What more could individuals and communities do for themselves?'***

Comments were mostly generated from discussion at ward forums and from discussions with different groups including the Environment Forum, Highland Youth Voice, the Inverness BID and the Third sector compact group. Focus groups with blind people and people with learning disabilities also provided views.

This question was answered not just in practical terms of what else individuals or communities could do, but also more fundamentally in terms of what people can expect the state to provide and where responsibility should rest for the delivery of public services. A range of opinions was expressed.

#### **Individuals and communities should / can do nothing more**

Those responding that communities and individuals could do no more did so either on grounds of principle or from a pragmatic perspective. The principle for some was that they felt this is why Councils exist and why people pay taxes for services to be organised by Councils, and an increase in Council Tax was preferable to services reducing. For others, if volunteering increased then a reduction in Council Tax should be available.

A more pragmatic view highlighted that there was no more capacity to volunteer any further. This view was expressed on a number of levels: on a personal level, related particularly to

working parents; at a community level, where high levels of volunteering were already in place for a range of services but with over-reliance on some very active people. A typical sentiment was that:

*'Communities can be very resilient, but there is only so much you can ask. Even in activist-rich areas, it's often sub-sets of the same people doing all the work'.*

More reliance on volunteers was seen to be particularly problematic in fragile rural areas, where the population is small and ageing, or in deprived areas where it is hard to recruit volunteers.

An alternative view was that instead of asking individuals and communities to do more, the Council should just do less. The question in the consultation referred to grass cutting and litter picking as examples, so most responses focused on these areas. Reducing or stopping grass cutting especially on road verges, unless there were safety concerns, was a common suggestion. Turning grass areas into allotments, doing more to prevent vandalism and providing lower levels of buildings maintenance were also cited.

#### *A sense of inevitability that communities and individuals would have to do more*

An opposing view was that communities and individuals would inevitably have to do more, as they have done in crisis situations before, and that this time we needed to make sure that the responsibility is shared '...where it is seen everyone is tightening belts and everyone is helping'.

#### *Seeing wider benefits from volunteering*

Others focused on the personal and community benefits from volunteering. Offering diversionary activities to young people and providing a sense of community spirit, pride and community responsibility were all cited as positive impacts from volunteering. Notably two disability groups (for people with learning disabilities and for deaf people) both recognised how volunteering could improve their wellbeing and make them feel more part of their community. They wanted more opportunity to be involved in volunteering, but did not know how to get support for this to happen.

For those in favour of communities and individuals doing more, this was expressed in terms of people doing more for themselves and their communities, some people being required to do more for their communities and for certain groups to do more.

#### *Individuals doing more for themselves*

A common view was that individuals could do more for themselves, especially around their own homes and businesses in terms of clearing snow, picking up litter, cutting grass and being more responsible for reducing their own waste and recycling more. To support this greater self-sufficiency, grit bins at the end of more roads would be needed and additional charges could be applied to those not looking after their environment. It was recognised that people would have to be encouraged to care more for their neighbours if help was needed.

#### *Particular individuals doing more for their communities*

It was suggested that some services provided by the Council, such as litter picking, street cleaning and grounds maintenance, should be done instead through community service orders set by the courts or by unemployed people claiming state benefits, and managed by the Council.



### Individuals doing more for their communities and community action

Examples of communities being active were provided and for some this is wide ranging:

*'In Ullapool the community is taking responsibility for facilities, providing museums, swimming pool, village hall, golf course, and public play park equipment. We are keen to develop community transport (to be energy efficient).'*

A range of ideas was provided from respondents on how more community action could be targeted. Popular ideas focused on the environment, especially for community groups to be organised to maintain public space and grounds including: grass cutting (less so in large parks); garden maintenance; flower beds and arrangements (including plant donations from individuals); vegetable and fruit planting as well as flowers; community gardens; removing overhanging branches; litter collections; and snow clearing from pavements.

To support this community involvement it was felt that training in grass cutting and gardening equipment would be needed and that sponsorship could be encouraged for beach cleaning, litter collections and the provision of flower tubs.

Community action to support education and young people included running more extra curriculum activities, play groups and youth clubs and supporting eco-schools development. Expanding community transport schemes further and having more recycling banks were mentioned.

Other ideas focused on more community ownership or management of assets such as: libraries, museums, public toilets, village halls, sports facilities, other buildings, open space and woods. It was also proposed that each community should be given the opportunity to establish a community energy company (on-shore renewable energy and wind turbines were mentioned). Another view was that instead of owning or managing community assets, communities could just take on more of the running costs of assets, including fund raising.

### Building capacity in communities to do more

To support communities to do more for themselves, three themes emerged, namely: actions for the Council, actions for the voluntary sector (or third sector) and other barriers to overcome.

Specific actions of the Council related to attitudes and practical support for communities. In terms of attitudes there was a view that the Council needed to be more positive and constructive in responding to community action. In addition there was a call for duplication in service delivery to stop, with the Council standing down from some service delivery where voluntary organisations also provided the service. Some practical support suggested for the Council included:

- The sharing of assets with community groups (e.g. minibuses);
- Providing support and guidance to community groups to get them established;
- Transferring budgets from the Council to other groups;
- Asking volunteers what else they could do, especially where they are based in Council owned facilities;
- For TEC services managers to agree the type of public works for communities to take on.

Specific actions for the voluntary (third) sector were:



- To provide more support systems for voluntary and community groups;
- To have paid staff to co-ordinate volunteers in communities;
- To work with communities for communities to identify what is needed and how best to do it;
- To link communities together in their volunteering;
- To develop more community facilities;
- To encourage more people to volunteer;
- To support people with sensory impairment and other disabilities to become volunteers;
- To help people gain more confidence through volunteering.

Other barriers to overcome were described as either regulatory (health and safety, disclosure checking and insurance cover) or personal (paying for transport to take part in community activities and uncertainty about losing benefit entitlement through volunteering).

#### *Particular organisations doing more for their communities*

Community councils were highlighted as a route for communities doing more. For some this meant simply that community councils should be more involved and more active, while others gave examples of the activities community councils were involved in. Sharing of good practice across community councils was seen as beneficial. Others saw the role specifically around identifying the maintenance needs of the community and organising the response to that from the community and with the level of funding and scale of volunteering to be approved by the Council.

Other organisations identified to support communities to do more were community businesses, not for profit organisations and social enterprise. Some suggested these could be created for specific tasks (e.g. grass cutting) and overseen by community councils. Other specific activities for these organisations included waste awareness and recycling and supporting homeless people. Council support for these groups was requested.

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## **Can we reduce the frequency of grass cutting and the number of flower beds?**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

In order to avoid a reduction in service, the consultation asked whether communities and individuals could do more across a number of areas. 32 separate comments were received on the question:

#### ***'Can we reduce the frequency of grass cutting and the number of flower beds?'***

Most comments were generated from discussions at ward forums, from individuals via the blog and email and from Community Councils.

#### **Views in favour**

Respondents to the proposal to review the standards of grounds maintenance were generally supportive, with people in favour of the suggestion to reduce the frequency of grass cutting. It was reported that where there were no safety issues this could be removed completely but it was recognised that aesthetically, it would need to continue in certain communities but that this should be at a reduced level. Respondents also noted that reducing the frequency would have a positive effect on the existing wildlife.

Combined with the reduction in frequency of grass cutting, there was also support for changing the maintenance of flowerbeds. Although respondents did not tend to comment on the complete remove of beds, it was noted that the planting policy should be changed to lower maintenance shrubs, perennials and wild flowers. There was also a significant level of support for communities taking over responsibility for flowerbed maintenance and one view that if there is no community interest then beds should be removed.

#### **Concerns**

It was noted that it is important for communities to look good and concern was expressed for the impact on tourism if standards were to fall; however it was also noted that there were difficult budget decisions to be made and for some reducing maintenance was preferable to other alternatives.

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## **Can we reduce the frequency of street cleaning?**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

In order to avoid a reduction in service, the consultation asked whether communities and individuals could do more across a number of areas. 24 separate comments were received on the question

#### ***'Can we reduce the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking?'***

Most comments were generated from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire. Comments were also received from specific groups such as Community Councils and Highland Youth Voice.

#### **Views against**

A number of respondents were concerned at the suggestion to reduce the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking. This was especially the view of Community Councils. Respondents were concerned that if the frequency of the service was reduced then street cleaning would just not happen, especially as the frequency is already low in many communities notably rural areas. There was also concern at the impact this would have on the environment, public health and in areas where flooding caused by excess litter has already occurred. The point was made that by reducing the frequency of street cleaning and litter picking then it would be reinforcing a negative message that these areas are not important.

#### **Alternatives to reduction**

Rather than reducing the frequency or standards of street cleaning or litter picking, it was suggested that the level of enforcement be increased. Effective enforcement, perhaps more community policing, needs to take place particularly in areas where there are known problems. Respondents noted that littering in particular needed to be seen as antisocial and it was suggested that a strong education and publicity campaign was needed.

A further suggestion was that people on community service or those who have been caught dropping litter should take on the role of litter picking. Respondents also suggested that schools need to take more responsibility and young people should not be allowed out at lunch times if litter is being dropped and not picked up. Another suggestion was that there need to be more bins and recycling bins in communities or to follow the Swedish model that provides a financial incentive for bottles that are returned into recycling points on the street.

#### **Views in favour**

A small number of respondents were supportive of the proposal to reduce street cleaning and litter picking, suggesting this should also be combined with an increase in fines. An alternative view however was that enforcement through fines should be tried first and then perhaps a reduction in cleaning should this approach be effective. A further suggestion was that a reduction could be made in town centres with the responsibility shifting to business owners to keep the front of their premises clean.

One respondent suggested that responsibility for litter picking should sit with Community Councils.

## **Can we reduce the frequency of litter picking?**

### **Qualitative Analysis**

In order to avoid a reduction in service, the consultation asked whether communities and individuals could do more across a number of areas. **A series of questions were asked regarding the issue of litter:**

- *How could community involvement help to reduce the cost of litter collection by £1m?*
- *What else can be done to be less tolerant of people dropping litter?*
- *Should we fine more people for dropping litter?*
- *Should we ask the Scottish Government to make fines higher for dropping litter?*

### ***How could community involvement help to reduce the cost of litter collection by £1m?***

Just over 110 separate comments were received on the question *How could community involvement help to reduce the costs of litter collection by £1m?* Most comments were generated from discussions at ward forums and from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire.

Respondents to the question regarding community involvement assisting to reduce the costs of litter collection suggested a range of avenues in which the public could assist in reducing these costs. Some suggested these from a personal perspective, what they as individuals could do, whilst others looked at what the community as a whole could achieve. Others had suggestions for the Council and also the Police.

#### **Personal responsibility**

A number of respondents reported that there was greater personal responsibility required on the issue of littering. This included greater responsibility for not dropping litter, for ownership of public space and civic pride and for greater recycling. It was suggested that there was greater education and awareness raising required and that parents needed to take responsibility for educating their children and for those caught dropping litter. A further suggestion was that businesses need to take responsibility for maintaining the space outside their premises.

#### **Communities doing more**

There was strong support amongst respondents for communities to be more involved in litter collections, perhaps through litter pick-ups, beach clean-ups, adopting a road for litter picking or community recycling composting schemes. This was a view received especially from ward forums. It was noted that many communities already undertake this role locally and that perhaps there should be greater recognition from the Council for those areas who do this.

It was noted that many groups within communities would be keen to be more involved in this type of community action such as the elderly and also disabled groups. It was noted that some groups make require some support and education on how best to manage this locally. A further view was that local Councillors should lead on this in their areas.

An alternative approach was that local social enterprises could take over the role of litter collection within communities.

One respondent suggested that the Council should cease to provide the service and that the community will be forced into taking over litter collection as otherwise there would be a negative impact.

#### Schools and young people

There was a general assumption from a number of respondents that children and young people are primarily responsible for littering within communities. Accordingly, respondents reported that schools and parents need to take greater responsibility for addressing the litter problem.

One area suggested was that greater education is required, especially with younger children. Schools and parents should be educating young people about the problems of litter, perhaps through the eco-school or health promoting school agendas.

An alternative approach however was that schools should be made responsible for litter picking, with compulsory litter picking within communities for young people. Some suggested this could be framed more positively though building links with the wider community and getting young people involved in litter picking evenings, perhaps by providing incentives such as a barbeque.

#### Community Service

Rather than young people taking on litter collection within communities, an alternative suggestion was that people on community service should be undertaking litter collection. There was also support for the proposal that rather than fines, people caught litter should be required to undertake litter collection instead. A further suggestion was that the long-term unemployed should be required to give something back to the community by collecting litter.

#### Council's Role

Some respondents suggested that there was a role for the Council in promoting community involvement in reducing the costs of litter collection. It was suggested that the Council should mount an anti-litter campaign across the area, not just aimed at young people. A further suggestion was that there needs to be a greater number of bins within communities to encourage putting litter in bins. Some suggested general bins whilst others suggested there should be the introduction of bins which split recyclable materials.

Respondents also noted that the Council should be enforcing littering more by patrolling and fining offenders.

#### Enforcement

A further range of views on reducing the costs of litter collection related to enforcement. A number of respondents reported that there was a greater role for the Police in enforcement with action taken against offenders and, as already mentioned, that community service would be more appropriate than fines. It was suggested that the Police needed a higher profile in enforcement activity.

Respondents noted that there was a need to increase the level and enforcement of fines and also that offenders should be named and shamed locally. An alternative suggestion was that

there should be incentives for the cleanest village or an amount paid per bag of rubbish collected.

#### Views against the suggestion

A small number of respondents noted their disapproval of any suggestion to reduce the Council's role in litter collection and increase community involvement. It was reported that some areas do not currently have a litter collection service and therefore the service should be expanded across all areas. It was queried whether volunteering could in reality solve a financial problem and also noted that the service requires to be undertaken by paid staff, especially in areas that rely on tourism.

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### ***What else can be done to be less tolerant of people dropping litter?***

Just over 100 separate comments were received on the question *What else can be done to be less tolerant of people dropping litter?* Most comments were generated from discussions at ward forums and from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire. Comments were also received from specific groups such as the Inverness Business Improvement District, Highland Youth Voice, the Environmental Forum and from Community Councils.

Similar to the question on community involvement, respondents to the question regarding tolerance of litter dropping suggested a range of approaches. Some suggested these from a personal perspective, what they as individuals could do, whilst others looked at what the community as a whole could achieve. Others had suggestions for the Council and also the Police.

#### Enforcement

Enforcement was viewed by respondents as the main approach through which to become less tolerant of people of people dropping litter. Primarily this was through enforcement of the current fine structure whilst others suggested increasing fines and enforcing. It was noted that fines for littering were higher in Europe and those who do not pay are prosecuted.

It was suggested there were a range of people who could take on the role of enforcing fines for littering, these included current wardens, traffic wardens, the police and the use of CCTV.

A number of respondents noted that there needed to be a zero tolerance approach to litter dropping. If people are caught or reported for littering then this must be acted upon as otherwise people will know these behaviours will go unpunished. A name a shame approach was also suggested however it was queried whether this has worked elsewhere.

An alternative suggestion was that community service – and the picking up of litter for the service - instead of fines would assist in reducing littering. A criminal charge would assist in reducing the tolerance of litter dropping.

It was noted that although the Police do not rate littering as a priority, if the public view it as a priority then they should be addressing the problem.

### Education

Another area suggested to assist in the approach to become less tolerant of litter dropping was education. Respondents suggested that this needs to be education of the whole community through a new improved education programme. The programme should focus upon personal responsibility and the negative impacts of littering upon the environment, perhaps through community newsletters.

It was suggested that parents and schools also need to take responsibility for children and young people in terms of education but also that businesses need to take a greater responsibility for the area outside their premises.

One suggestion was that there should be a cut in the level of litter collection and then an education programme to follow this up.

### Council's Role

Respondents also suggested that the Council has a role in reducing tolerance of litter dropping. It was noted that there should be greater enforcement of on the spot fines and a zero tolerance approach taken on this. It was suggested that more bins should be provided locally, including bins for recyclables and that bins should be emptied more regularly. A further suggestion was that improved signage is required in different languages.

One respondent proposed that the Council should look at good practice approaches elsewhere, for example Australia.

### Community

The final area suggested by respondents relates to the community as a whole. Respondents reported that communities need to encourage greater civic pride and that it is communities who should take responsibility to encourage non-acceptance of litter dropping and challenge offenders. It was suggested that if locals take on the litter collection role then they will be less tolerant of people dropping litter but it would be important that they are able to enforce fines if people are caught dropping litter.

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### ***Should we fine more people for dropping litter?***

Just under 140 separate comments were received on the question *Should we fine people more for dropping litter?* Most comments were generated from discussions at ward forums and from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire. Comments were also received from specific groups such as the Environment Forum, the Economic Forum, Youth Voice, Sight Action and from Community Councils.



### Views in favour

There was strong support from respondents to the proposal for fining people more for dropping litter. Respondents noted that this should be not only be for dropping litter but also dropping cigarette butts and dog fouling. It was reported that there should only be an increase in fining if this was cost effective, noting that it may result in an increase in court prosecutions.

Respondents noted that one of the most important things alongside any increase in fining would be enforcement. Concerns were noted at how fining could be enforced and it noted that somebody may need to be employed to undertake this. A further suggestion was that those caught should be 'named and shamed'.

In addition to any plan to fine people more, it was suggested that this should be accompanied by an advertising campaign to highlight the new approach.

### Views against

A number of people were against the suggestion to fine people more for dropping litter. It was reported that the administration involved would not be cost effective, that it would be expensive for the police and would cost more than it generates. Respondents also noted that fining doesn't work and that a positive incentive would be more effective. A further suggestion was that 'naming and shaming' would be more effective than a fine.

A number of respondents were unsure about the proposal to fine people more for dropping litter. It was queried how successful current fines are in reducing litter dropping and suggested that fines may be counter-productive. Respondents noted that challenging individual behaviour may be more effective. It was also noted that the Council is unable to fine minors who are believed to be the major offenders.

It was suggested that the Council should increase the number of bins available to encourage people not to drop litter and it was noted by the Sight Action group that the Council should re-think the colour of bins as black is a problem for individuals with sight impairments.

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### ***Should we ask the Scottish Government to make fines for dropping litter higher?***

120 separate comments were received on the question *Should we ask the Scottish Government to make fines for dropping litter higher?* Most comments were generated from discussions at ward forums and from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire. Comments were also received from specific groups such as the Environment Forum, the Economic Forum, Youth Voice, Inverness Business Improvement District and from Community Councils.

### Views in favour

As with the question on increasing the number of fines, there was strong support from respondents regarding the proposal to increase the level of fines. It was suggested that there would be a need to enforce any increase in fines and that someone would be required to do this. Some respondents suggested that communities or businesses should have the

power to enforce fines for littering. One respondent suggested that parents should be fined should their children's be caught dropping litter.

Alternative suggestions

A number of respondents suggested that rather than increasing the level of fines, community service should be introduced as the penalty for dropping litter. Some reported that this would be a more effective approach whilst an alternative view was that the two should be used together.

Some respondents noted that an increase in fines would not be cost effective and it would be better to publicise the current fining policy and to enforce that instead.

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## Further analysis of the volunteering questions asked of the Citizens' Panel 2010

When asked “**do you currently volunteer in any capacity?**” 36% of respondents answered “yes” – a higher figure than the rates recorded previously: 29% in 2009, 27% in 2008 and 2007 (the year when the question was first asked). The notable differences by categories are by age, housing tenure, area and length of residency in the Highlands:

- By age, the highest percentage of volunteers appears in the 65-74 (45%) age band followed by 45-64 (41%) and those 75+ (40%) with a markedly lower percentage in the 25-44 age band (27%).
- People who own their own house are more likely to record that they volunteer (40%) than those who do not own their own house (31%).
- As was the case in 2009, people resident in Ross, Skye and Lochaber in 2010 are more likely to volunteer (45%) than those residing in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (37%) and those living in Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey (35%). This result is statistically significant.

At the ward level, the highest percentages of respondents who indicate that they volunteer are found in the following wards:

- Eilean a' Cheò (52%)
- Badenoch and Strathspey (51%)
- Caol and Mallaig (50%)
- Fort William and Ardnamurchan (47%)
- Landward Caithness (47%)
- Dingwall and Seaforth (46%)

The wards recording the smallest percentage of respondents as volunteers are:

- Inverness Central (19%)
- Cromarty Firth (26%)
- Inverness South (27%)

It is worth noting that people resident in the Highlands for less than a year are volunteering at a rate (35%) which is only slightly less than the figure recorded for those resident for more than 5 years (40%).

### Number of Voluntary Activities in which People are Involved

Those who indicated that they volunteered were then asked: “**How many voluntary activities are you involved in?**” Nearly half, 49% volunteer in more than one activity. The breakdown is shown below.

Number of Voluntary Activities in which People are Involved In (2010 N = 572)

|              | <b>2010</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2008</b> | <b>2007</b> |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|              | %           | %           | %           | %           |
| One          | 51          | 43          | 43          | 46          |
| Two          | 28          | 29          | 32          | 30          |
| Three        | 10          | 14          | 14          | 14          |
| Over three   | 11          | 13          | 12          | 10          |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b>  | <b>100</b>  |

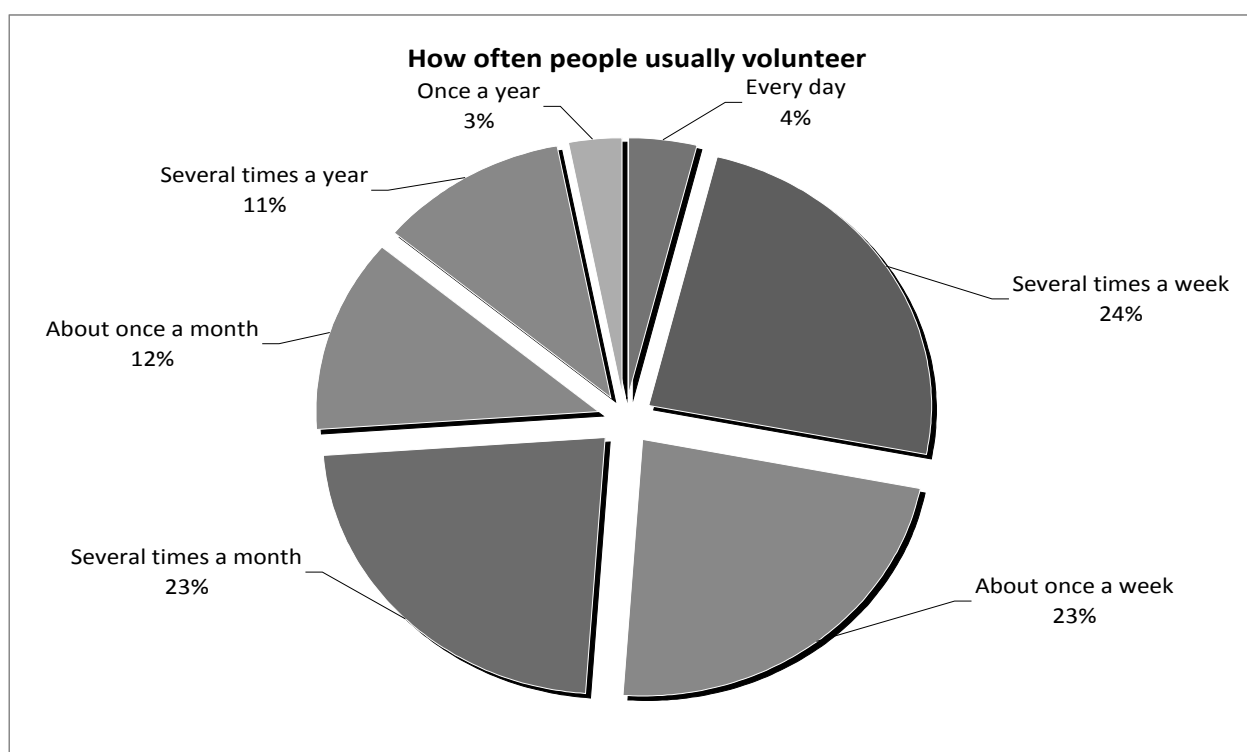
### Frequency of Volunteering

Those who volunteer were then asked: **“How often do you usually volunteer?”** The pattern of responses for 2010 is very similar to those of past years as is evident in Table 4.5 below. Variations are minor given that the question is not asking respondents to be precise. What the results show is that almost 3 in 4 volunteers (74%) are usually engaged in volunteering activities at least several times a month. There are no notable differences in responses by gender, age group, disability, or employment status.

|                       | 2010       | 2009       | 2008       | 2007       |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
|                       | %          | %          | %          | %          |
| Every day             | 4          | 5          | 3          | 6          |
| Several times a week  | 24         | 27         | 26         | 21         |
| About once a week     | 23         | 25         | 28         | 27         |
| Several times a month | 23         | 17         | 16         | 19         |
| About once a month    | 12         | 13         | 9          | 11         |
| Several times a year  | 11         | 11         | 18         | 15         |
| Once a year           | 3          | 1          | 1          | 1          |
| <b>Total</b>          | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> | <b>100</b> |

In 2010 N= 578

The pie chart shows the same information in a different form.



## Are the public and users of services able to pay more for the services they receive?

### Quantitative analysis

We asked the Citizens' Panel, whether we should consider increasing charges or introducing new charges, which may avoid or reduce some of the cuts in services the Council is having to consider.

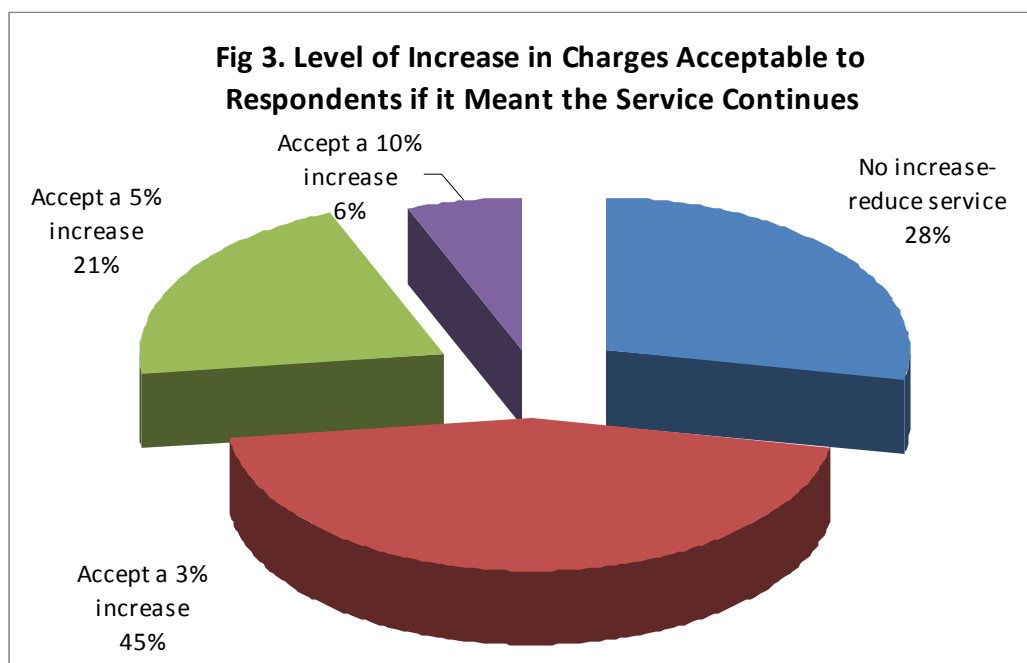
The Panel were asked:

***“Thinking about any charges you have paid for Council services in the past year, what level of increase would be acceptable to you, if it meant the service continues?”***

There then followed 4 options and respondents were asked to choose one of them only.

Of the 90% of the sample who answered the question the following were the choices they made (see also Fig 3):

- 28% chose “no increase-reduce service”
- 45% chose “3% increase”
- 21% chose “5% increase”
- 6% chose “10% increase”



Support for the option to have “**no-increase-reduce service**” was strongest amongst respondents unable to work (37%), people living in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (32%), people who do not own their own home (32%), people who are disabled (31%) and people resident in the Highlands less than 5 years (31%). This option received lower levels of support from respondents who live in Ross, Skye and Lochaber (24%), who are employed (25%), who live in their own home (26%), and who do not have a disability (26%).

Support for the option to **increase charges by 3%** was consistent across all categories - the only notable difference from the average being that this option received a lower level of support from people resident in the Highlands less than a year (37%).

Support for the option to **increase charges by 5%** was at its strongest amongst people living in Ross, Skye and Lochaber (25%) and at its lowest amongst people living in Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (17%).

The second question in this part was:

**“The Council sells some advertising space. Do you think it should see more advertising and sponsorship space?”**

Some 93% of the sample answered this question and of them:

- **88%** answered **“yes”**
- **12%** answered **“no”**

There were no notable differences in the answer to this question by the various categories of respondents.

### **Qualitative analysis**

Nearly 150 separate comments were received in response to the question

***‘Are the public and users of services able to pay more for the services they receive?’***

Most comments were generated from face to face meetings and discussions at ward forums, with partners and special interest groups, notably Highland Youth Voice, Sight Action and the Deaf Forum. Internet feedback was generated from the blog, the on-line questionnaire and e-mails.

This question was answered from a personal and a community perspective. Personal opinion was mixed on this question with some favouring an increase and some not. Those taking a community perspective considered that some people could pay more while others could not. A recurring theme across the range of views provided was the need to make sure that the poorest people could still access Council services if they needed them.

#### ***Views in favour***

Where opinion favoured paying more for services this was usually qualified by a number of factors or concerns.

#### **Considerations - ability to pay**

A common concern was the need to consider ability to pay if charges are to increase, especially for people on low incomes or those dependent on essential services. Means testing and introducing more concessions were suggested as ways round this. Concerns were expressed about who might qualify for concessions, with older people seen as a priority, but also in relation to linking concessions to benefit entitlement as this would not necessarily help all those households on a low income. Strongly expressed views were made that if charges increase then more promotional work is needed to make people aware of the concessions available and for that information to be provided in accessible formats, especially for people with sensory impairment.

#### **Considerations – where increase in charges could be made**

In addition to limits on who should pay depending on affordability, limits were expressed on the type of services for which charges could be made or increased. Those which it was felt could have charges made or increased related to 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<sup>1</sup>. Others said generally they would pay more rather than lose the service.

### Additional considerations

Other points made about increasing charging focused on: the level of charging; the need for an open, fair and transparent charging policy; that administration costs of charging need to be proportionate to the income raised; and that particular impacts for private business and rural areas should be considered. Some expressed a view that more consultation is needed before particular charges are introduced.

On charging levels, suggestions included nominal charges (50p or £1 for currently free bus travel and £5 for the bus pass for older people enabling free travel). For some these charges would be symbolic as well as income generating, reinforcing that we all have to pay for services. Others highlighted that care was needed in the price set to avoid demand reducing, with increases of 3%, 5% and 10% suggested (the latter only for those better off).

Comments were also made in favour of increasing the Council Tax as a way of paying more for services. Removing any Council Tax discount on second homes was suggested.

### **Views against**

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.

Another view was that children, older and sick people specifically should not pay more.

A contrasting preference was to see a reduction in service or a complete review of spending priorities before agreeing to an increase in charges.

Concerns about negative impacts of charging were raised in terms of the potential increase in fly tipping if waste charges increased and on traffic warden time if new car parking charges were introduced.

For some respondents, this was not a personal question about whether they individually would pay more for services, but a **broader question about affordability within the community as a whole**. Most of the responses taking a broader community perspective highlighted that some people could afford to pay more but that others could not depending on their income. Means testing was suggested as a way enabling those on lower incomes to still access services if charges were introduced or increased. Another view was for people's entitlement to benefits to be promoted. For others charging would be divisive in communities and disadvantage poor areas and vulnerable people further.

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<sup>1</sup> Separate consultation questions were asked on charges relating to music tuition, libraries, bus and ferry fares and reducing clothing grants. Responses to these questions are analysed and reported separately within this document. Other ideas for charges were provided by respondents. These are reported below.



## Other consultation responses on charges and income

### Quantitative analysis

We asked the Citizens' Panel,

**'Do you think the Council should sell more advertising and sponsorship space?'**

1471 responses were received. 87% selected yes, 13% selected no.

Finally, respondents were invited to tell us what other suggestions or ideas they may have on how the Council can make savings. Some 33% of the sample availed themselves of the opportunity to present their ideas. A number of respondents made multiple suggestions.

### Staffing

Staffing matters exercised the greatest number of respondents – with 11% of the entire sample raising issues to do with this general topic. Under this heading the following was observable:

- The majority of the comments - 7% of the whole sample - had to do with respondents calling for what might be broadly summarised as a **comprehensive review of staffing levels and staffing performance**. A particular focus was placed on reviewing/ reducing management and administrative posts.
- Some 3% of the sample wanted to see the **pay levels of senior staff** reviewed/frozen/reduced.
- For 2% of the sample **staff expenses and benefits** need to be reviewed/ reduced.
- Some 1% of respondents stated **staff travel** requires to be reduced. Comments in this vein were accompanied at times by suggestions that video/telephone conferencing be used for meetings and/or that more use be made of car-pooling.

A selection of the comments made are as follows:

*"You should aim to reduce management and administrative staff costs by transferring responsibility to front line staff. It is more important you maintain front line services than the bureaucratic structure behind them. You need to reduce red tape in particular and paperwork in general. A reduction in management and administrative staff would reduce the need for offices. Empowering front line staff would create a greater sense of responsibility and result in greater job satisfaction and, consequently, improved service levels. In general, front line staff have a far better idea as to what is required by the public (their/your customers)."*

*"Reduce management. Increase working week to 37 hours. Reduce pensions. No sick pay for first 1, 2, or 3 days off/amount of time off on full pay. Reduce/remove overtime payments-esp for weekend working."*

*"Reduce staff numbers and raise efficiency and productivity. Reduce levels of absenteeism and sickness. "*

*“Wage freeze should be profiled to allow lowest paid to have cost of living (real value) pay rises with professional and officer graded progressively reduced or frozen.”*

*“Reduce "head office costs", eliminate non-essential roles, i.e. those that are not directly involved in the provision of core services, concentrate spending on "front - line" jobs in the communities. Review senior and middle management salaries and pension schemes to reduce them and bring them into line with the private sector. Review pay rates across the board.”*

*“Invest more in its staff, particularly in management training. Introduce a management by objectives pay system for managers by making a percentage of their current salary (not an increase) subject to meeting targets, providing a method of not paying so much for poor performance. Create a continuous improvement culture like the Toyota Way, and as a result improve efficiency. Involve staff in the target setting and reward the identification of areas where vacancies can be converted to job cuts.”*

*“In general I think the council should lower salaries at the top level and have a pay freeze for staff - I work for a private company and have had no pay increase for two years - this year we received one and a half per cent and there have been a number of redundancies! ...But I do believe to get rid of jobs, any jobs, would mean a real chill for the Inverness economy which relies so heavily on the public sector's spending power. “*

### Councillors

The next highest number of comments came from the 5% of the entire sample who highlighted what they saw as the **need for a reduction in what councillors received by way of expenses and/or remuneration**. A number of respondents called for the amount of travel by councillors to be reduced – also often with attached suggestions that video/telephone conferencing be used for meetings and/or that car-pooling take place.

#### **Other Suggestion for Reductions in Expenditure**

3% of the entire sample advocated that **spending on Gaelic be reduced** in one guise or another. The main area of expenditure which such respondents felt should be reduced or eliminated was the production of road signs in Gaelic and English.

For 1% of the entire sample the desire is to see **spending cut on entertainment**, fireworks, hanging baskets, streetscapes, illuminations and street art.

Again 1% of respondents cited the need for a **reduction in energy costs** by ensuring that the heating and lighting of council premises and the use of equipment and transport is happening in the most energy efficient way. One person suggested the following:

*“Have a pool of electric leased vans for city or large town use to cut down on fuel. Consider using oil from council kitchens to make bio-fuel to run vehicles with.”*

**Spending on consultants** was an area of expenditure which 1% of respondents said needed either to be reduced or eliminated.

For another 1% of respondents the advice they gave was that The Highland Council should look at **sharing services and engage in more joint working with other statutory services**. People said:

*“Pooling’ of resources – purchasing – procurement - all councils in Scotland should use their combined power more effectively.”*

*“Consider sharing administrative services with other public bodies e.g. financial, human resources, administrative staff with, for example, NHS, neighbouring local authorities.”*

A similar number of respondents (1%) said that there would be a **comprehensive review of property assets**. They said:

*“Have a wide ranging property review across all departments and dispose of many underused buildings and reduce the floor space per person in all the remaining buildings.”*

*“Sell empty buildings - former offices, schools etc to developers. A school house in my area has been empty for 6 years despite local interest to buy it.”*

Other ideas presented included the following:

- improve provision of recycling facilities to enable further reductions in collections of waste;
- stop providing hot meals in schools;
- reduce recruitment advertising in newspapers – instead; direct people to the website to find out more;
- learn from the private sector how to run care homes more cheaply;
- adult education classes to take place only if they are fully subscribed –with fees paid in advance;
- involve the private sector in analysing business processes;
- require staff to clean their own offices;
- outsource any service that can be delivered more cost-effectively by other suppliers;
- develop partnerships with local businesses and the independent sector;
- lease rather than purchase equipment;
- monitor, by use of technology, the use of vehicles for private purposes;
- reduce the grant to Visit Scotland with community promotional activities being bolstered instead;
- use local suppliers instead of major companies;
- eliminate concessionary rates;
- do not brand all vehicles.

### Raising Income

A number of respondents also turned their attention to **raising income** – with these comments laying out general principles:

*“Identify alternative sources of revenue, including looking at how services can be boosted to improve income rather than automatically resorting to cuts.”*

*“Audit current procedures in services to ensure maximisation of income.”*

A number of respondents had **specific ideas** to suggest:

*“Fully utilise the use of council buildings - hire out for events, business seminars, training courses, workshops/conferences, summer activities.”*

*“Run a local lottery - a one off lottery with all proceeds going to our community centres.”*

*Turn Castle Street Car Park in Inverness into a public car park – “use this to generate short stay parking for the old town shops.”*

*“Sell more plants at the Floral Hall - advertise more and do some garden advice days.”*

*“Charge business for the plethora of ‘illegal’ road signs that have been erected in the Skye & Lochalsh area over the last couple of years - this used to be very tightly monitored. Possible source of income if all business have to pay a regulated charge.”*

*Charge parents for children’s school stationery.*

In addition, some respondents voiced their support for generating more income by increases in charges, rents, fines and penalties.

### **Qualitative analysis**

We asked a general question about whether people had suggestions for other ways we could make savings. This generated many views on charges and income streams as described below. Face to face discussions from ward forums, Highland Youth Voice and the Economic and Environment forums generated the most ideas. Written feedback was received also from letters, the on-line questionnaire, e-mails and the blog.

#### **Sale of Council assets**

Repeated comments were made about selling Council buildings and vigorous marketing to promote sales and achieve good prices. Other assets to sell included Council owned land, caravan and camping sites and green spaces in residential developments as an opportunity for garden extensions.

#### **Leases and hires of Council Buildings**

Leasing and hiring of Council assets also featured, notably more hiring of space in schools, school hostels and leasing out the minibus fleet in evenings, at weekends and in school holidays. Reviewing hire and lease charges was also mentioned, charging commercially priced rates, especially where these have been historically low and not reviewed. A contrasting view was that two hire rates could be charged; a commercial rate and a lower rate for community groups or social enterprise.

#### **Selling space**

Selling space to private business was also suggested for example running cafes, shops or other franchises in Council buildings. Advertising was also suggested from Council buildings, land, vehicles and the website.

### Changing use and increasing use

Another idea was to change the use of buildings in public ownership to generate tourist income from entrance fees, for example with the change of use of Inverness castle for a museum proposed. Encouraging more flexible use and multi use of buildings was mentioned. Other comments about usage included rescheduling opening times to maximise usage along with improved marketing and charging higher entry fees.

### **Charging**

Views on charging vary according to the scale of services for which charges should be made. One view was that all services should be reviewed for charges with an increase applied across the board, either a nominal charge of around £1 or £2 or up to a 10% increase. For some this should apply only to those who can afford it. For others charging is preferable to losing a service. Another view was that there should be no increase in charges and instead savings should be made.

### Specific charges

Recurring ideas for specific charges<sup>2</sup> included:

- entrance fees to all museums with scope for family tickets;
- entrance fees to community centres;
- higher prices for Highlife card membership;
- the need to discount swimming lessons only to those unable to pay;
- entrance fees for public toilets; and
- offering discounted bus fares rather than free travel with passes.

Others ideas focused on charging Council employees for car parking (including proposing salary deduction for payment). Another idea was to sell products more in Council facilities e.g. stationary in libraries. Other ideas on waste included increasing the cost of collecting waste and special collections further and to build an incinerator and charge other Councils for incinerating their waste. Pursuing debt better and increasing fines were also mentioned.

### Taxation

Comments on levels of tax focused on two key areas; firstly strong views to increase council tax and/or income tax to retain services with the current freeze on council tax seen as unsustainable. One respondent claimed there was a general mood 'to pay more to get more'. Secondly a common theme was to end the discount on second/holiday homes or to increase it above the rates (doubling or trebling it) and for the surplus to be re-invested in affordable housing where it is in short supply.

### Energy generation

Renewable energy was raised as an income source for the Council where Council-owned wind farms on Council land could generate income. In addition, for some this could avoid local disputes about how to invest local income from wind farms. Another view was for the Council to levy a charge on income from wind farms. Another energy income idea is to develop energy from waste.

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<sup>2</sup> Specific questions are asked about libraries, community centres and museums. They will be analysed and reported separately in the document entitled "*Looking at our Community Facilities*"

Other income

Income streams suggested were from licensing charges (salons performing tattooing, piercing and electrolysis treatments) and from the sale of recycled materials. Voluntary donations, fundraising events and a Highland Council lottery were also suggested. Looking to staff to identify income streams and incentivising them to do that was highlighted; while for others external sources should be pursued more e.g. European funding and by using voluntary organisations further to attract other funding sources. A contrasting view was for social clauses to be used in Council contracts to provide benefit which would not be directly financial, but of benefit to the Council and the community.

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## **Should we increase the fees for music tuition or reduce the service by half?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding the delivery of music tuition.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Just under 80 separate comments were received on:

#### ***Reviewing the delivery of music tuition and region-wide music support.***

and specifically whether we should consider increasing the fees for music tuition or reducing the service by half.

Most comments were generated from individuals electronically via email, the online questionnaire or the blog but comments were also received from Community Councils, MSPs, Youth Voice and Parent Forums. A representation was also received from Friends of Highland Young Musicians and one from a group of national musicians and composers. A petition of 3821 signatories was received in support of the retention of music tuition in the Highlands.

#### **Benefits of Music Tuition**

In the main, the representations received were in support of the retention of music tuition in its current form. Representations tended to focus upon the benefits achieved from music tuition and the principle that tuition should be available to those who need it. Respondents highlighted that music tuition improves the skills of young people educationally and socially, including improved self-esteem and confidence, personal development, cognitively, socially and emotionally. It was noted that access to music tuition should be a right like any other educational subject.

In addition to individual benefits, respondents noted the wider benefits to Highland culture. The importance of the diverse musical heritage of the Highlands was highlighted and the contribution to it by many young people who have benefited from music tuition in schools praised. Concerns were expressed that some of this musical culture could be lost as a result of reducing music tuition in schools. The group of national musicians and composers that responded noted the success of the Highland Young Musician of the Year and that the standard of musician produced locally is amongst the best in Scotland. Concern was expressed at the potential loss any reduction in music tuition could bring to the wider music community.

#### **Availability of Tuition**

The current availability of music tuition was a further reason provided by respondents why music tuition should remain in its current forum. It was reported that the availability of tuition across the area is already limited and that reducing the number of teachers would result in a greater number of young people being unable to participate. There was also concern that if the number of staff were reduced, that pupils currently undertaking tuition would have this withdrawn. Respondents considered that given the size of the area tutors are required to cover, any reduction in the number of staff would result in the reduction in the range of



instrumental provision on offer in certain areas. Respondents also reported that given the rurality of Highland, the availability of alternative private provision is very limited so that if Council tuition is withdrawn then there is little chance of being able to access an alternative tutor, cost implications aside.

However, an alternative view was that it was preferable to reduce the number of staff than increase the cost of provision and that places would just need to become more competitive. A further suggestion was that the number of paid staff could be reduced but additional support could be provided by qualified volunteers. This type of support already being provided in some communities. It was also suggested that the number of staff should only be reduced if the demand for tuition falls as a result of increased tuition costs.

#### *Affordability of Tuition*

The affordability of increased tuition charges gave cause for concern to a number of respondents. Whilst some were content to pay increased fees, others were not. There was concern that many parents would be unable to afford tuition prices at the suggested level leading to a system where only children of well-off parents would be able to receive music tuition. There was a strong feeling that such an approach would discriminate against people on low incomes and also where there were a number of children in a family. It was noted that Council tuition is accessible to those who cannot afford private lessons but that the proposed price increase would lead to lessons being almost as expensive as the private sector. Should the prices increase, respondents were concerned that this could also result in fewer pupils opting to receive music tuition, leading to a need for fewer tutors and that the quality would ultimately fall.

It was also noted that at present many pupils share lessons and it is only when pupils increase in standard that they receive one to one tuition. All pupils pay the same price. One respondent reported that this was a reasonable approach but that should prices increase considerably, more parents are likely to request individual lessons and the number of pupils receiving tuition would inevitably have to fall. A further view though was that those receiving one to one tuition should pay more whilst those receiving shared lessons should pay less. It was felt that there should be a structure to the fees paid.

However, alternative views on the issue of increasing fees were submitted. Some respondents felt that an increase in fees was a better alternative than a reduction in provision and would at least ensure the service was retained. Respondents reported that there was a need to retain current staffing levels as otherwise expertise would be lost. It was also noted that an increase in fees would not be possible for all therefore the vulnerable needed to be protected through a concession scheme.

#### *Alternative Proposals*

There were a number of alternative suggestions proposed by respondents in an attempt to retain the current level of music tuition. As outlined above, a number of different payment proposals were suggested. In addition, it was also proposed that despite undertaking exams, pupils should pay for lessons beyond second year and that there should be a formal rental for instrument hire. A number of respondents suggested there should be more of a focus on the service raising income, for example through concerts, and a recommendation to look at the Merton Music Foundation. This organisation is a charity which, although charging for tuition, raises considerable amounts to sustain itself through concerts, Christmas fares

etc. There was also a suggestion from one respondent that they would be happy to pay more Council tax to retain this type of service.

Further suggestions for retaining music provision included fortnightly instead of weekly lessons in order to reduce costs, or, as outlined above, engaging more volunteers in the provision of the service, especially the extra-curricular elements. It was proposed that those who do not practice should no longer receive tuition and also that online music tuition could be considered. A further suggestion from one respondent was that the traditional music centre in Plockton should be closed as it would be unfair to continue to fund music provision for a minority at a time when tuition across the Highlands is at threat.

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## **Can we reduce central support for Library services?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding central support for library services.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

28 separate comments were received on the questions of

- *Can we reduce the logistical support for Libraries?*
- *Could we introduce charges for requests?*
- *Could we reduce the frequency of mobile library visits?*

Most comments were generated from individuals electronically via email, the online questionnaire or the blog but comments were also received from Community Councils.

#### **Library Support Unit**

Of those responding on the issue of logistical support to libraries, respondents were against the proposal to reduce such support. It was reported that to reduce this service would be counterproductive given that the central unit provides professional support for front line library staff which even more important given the geographical spread of the area. It was noted that the central unit updates resources, attends to the circulation of book and also training which is vital for the library network. A small number of respondents on this topic stated that they had previously been librarians and whilst noting a particular interest, affirmed the value of the central support unit.

#### **Mobile Library Service**

Respondents to this series of questions were also generally against the proposal to reduce the frequency of the mobile library service. It was noted that the service to rural communities was already limited and that further reduction would result in the social isolation of the most vulnerable. However, an alternative view was that the service could be reduced, perhaps to once every four weeks, but that this should also be combined with the ability to borrow more books at any time for those affected customers.

#### **Charging for Requests**

The final area of the proposal, relating to introducing charging for requests, overall received support from respondents. There was support for charging for requests and also further suggestions for income generation. These included that there should be increased charges for late fees, that internet usage over the first half hour should be charged, that there could be a joining fee or that users could be charged a minimal amount, e.g. 50p a book, for each item they borrow. However, an alternative view was that although there should be charges for requests, there was a principle that libraries should be free to the user.

Although there was support for introducing charging, there was also a level of concern that this could have a negative impact on the most vulnerable users e.g. the elderly and the young. It was also noted that with the number of small libraries across Highland, most do not

carry a large stock of books so it would be inevitable that people would wish to request books leading to increased charges for rural customers.

#### Alternative Proposals

Reflecting the level of concern for rural communities, a number of respondents made alternative suggestions for the provision of library services in rural areas. It was noted that there could be better use made of existing local buildings such as the school and perhaps a partnership explored between the community and the library service. A variation on this idea was the suggestion to reproduce a model operating in rural England where books are provided by the library service and put into the local village hall in lockable shelving. The service is staffed by volunteers locally who can receive support from the central team if necessary. The local nature of this model encouraged greater use of the library and the donation of books from locals. A final suggest was to operate a postal delivery service for books based on internet ordering at community halls.

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## **Can we reduce the level of subsidies for public transport?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding subsidies for public transport.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

20 separate comments were received on the proposal to:

#### ***Review the level of subsidies for public transport.***

Most comments were generated from individuals and Community Councils.

#### ***Views against***

Amongst those responding, there wasn't strong support for the proposal to reduce the level of subsidies for public transport. It was reported that on principle, subsidies required to be retained for remote rural communities where no other transport provision existed. Any proposal to reduce subsidies would inevitably result in the service being lost and this would hit the most vulnerable hardest i.e. the elderly, disabled and those on low incomes. A further point expressed was that any reduction in the availability of public transport would result in fewer people remaining or moving to remote rural areas and therefore the potential for depopulation.

Respondents observed that not everyone can drive and not everyone has access to a vehicle. A further view was that for environmental reasons the Council should not be proposing to cut funding for public transport when individuals should be encouraged to use public transport instead of personal cars.

However, some respondents noted that currently, many of the subsidised routes are unreliable and there was a view that the Council should not have to pay for poor service. It was acknowledged though that despite this, some isolated areas rely on the subsidies and with no competition, the route will be lost if the subsidy is reduced.

#### ***Alternative suggestions***

Some respondents proposed alternative ways of reducing the subsidy but making routes more financially viable. It was suggested that better timetabling, for example timing buses to meet trains, could potentially increase the use of such routes and make them more viable in the longer term. Another suggestion was that smaller buses and increased fares could also allow the subsidy to be reduced. It was also noted that people would be happy to pay more if the service was more reliable.

Respondents noted the need to promote which routes receive a subsidy and to remind communities that unless they make use of the routes they are likely to lose them. It was also suggested that potential partnerships should be investigated such as using income from tourist fares to subsidise the transport routes.

Another view was that all Council budgets were likely to be reduced so it was inevitable that cuts in public transport subsidies would be required. A further view suggested that all services should be reviewed as not all serve the employment areas required and that any review should be evidence-based.

## **Can we review the Clothing Grant Allowance?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding the Clothing Grant Allowance.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

26 separate comments were received on the proposal to

#### ***Reduce the level of award and change to a voucher system for the Clothing Grant Allowance.***

Most comments were generated from individuals, via the blog or by email and from Community Councils.

#### **Views in favour of the voucher system**

Respondents to the proposal on the Clothing Grant Allowance had differing views. There was support for changing to a voucher system, with the suggestion that the current system is open to abuse and that this would ensure the money was spent school clothing. It was suggested however that there was a need to ensure there were a range of suppliers across the area in order to avoid stigmatisation and also the need to ensure that designated suppliers would not over-charge for goods. One view was that it was important the voucher system did not cost more in administration.

#### **Views against the voucher system**

However many respondents were also against the principle of a voucher system, indicating that a cash-based system allows people to take advantage of offers and to shop around. One respondent felt that the voucher system was 'abhorrent' and there was concern from others that such a process stigmatises and people could consider it degrading.

#### **Concern at reduction in amount**

On the other area of the proposal, namely reducing the overall amount, there was limited support. Respondents noted that the proposal equated to a 40% reduction, which was regarded as inappropriate given that the current £50 was not high and that it was to cover the whole year. It was noted that clothes are not getting any cheaper and shoes are expensive. There was concern any reduction would result in people having to compromise either on quality or the number of items, which would have a detrimental impact upon young people.

One suggestion was that the Council should enforce a dress code as this in turn would reduce discrimination.

## **Can we reduce the level of grant to Social Enterprise involved in local re-use and recycling schemes?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding grants for social enterprise organisations.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

20 separate comments were received on the proposal to

#### ***Review the level of grant to Social Enterprise Groups involved in local re-use and recycling schemes.***

Most comments were generated from individuals and from Community Councils.

#### **Views in favour**

Respondents to the proposal to review the level of grant to social enterprise groups were divided in opinion. One view expressed was that a 10% reduction would be fair and that all organisations need to share the budget cuts. It was noted that organisations should be encouraged to make efficiencies and that perhaps people could contribute a small amount for what they receive. A further view was that it was appropriate to reduce the budget for these organisations as only a few Highland communities benefit from them but alongside it was accepted that Highland Council may have to take a more pro-active role in promoting recycling. One suggestion was that grants should be start up grants only and then tapered off.

#### **Views against**

However, the alternative view expressed was that these organisations should be supported as they are contributing to Council and national recycling targets and reducing landfill costs. It was noted that many will be unable to find efficiencies as they already rely considerably on volunteer labour. In addition, they provide social benefits as they provide employment opportunities for individuals who may not be employed elsewhere.

It was suggested that a uniform service of this nature is required across the Highland area and that given the positive contribution being made, funding should be increased for these organisations. It was noted that the role is uneconomic as otherwise private companies would be undertaking it and suggested that prior to any change being implemented, the social return on investment of these organisation should be assessed.

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## **Can we reduce the level of grant to Community Transport Schemes?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding grants to Community Transport Schemes.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

23 separate comments were received on the proposal to

#### ***Review the level of grant to Community Transport Schemes.***

Most comments were generated from individuals and from Community Councils.

#### **Views against**

Views on the proposal to reduce the level of grant to Community Transport Schemes were split. On principle, many respondents disagreed with the proposal noting that they provide a vital service. Respondents suggested that the service is extremely valuable for the elderly, less well off and disabled where either transport is inadequate or is not available. It was also noted that for many, Community Transport schemes are a lifeline service.

A number of respondents suggested there was a need to increase the service to make it more accessible, as it often cannot be used for scheduled appointments as places are booked up.

#### **Views in favour**

However, some respondents noted that there was a need for everyone to accept a share of budget cuts and it was suggested that groups should be encouraged to find efficiencies or other resources.

There was concern that although the potential saving from reducing the grant would be small, there could be a potentially massive impact upon local transport schemes, with many having to close if the grant is reduced. It was noted that the benefits of the schemes include enabling people to remain in their own homes and communities longer therefore reducing care costs.

#### **Alternatives to reduction**

It was suggested that rather than reducing the grants, alternative cost cutting measures could be sought such as cutting the number of Gaelic and general road signs or a local taxi firm providing the service but at a reduce rate. A further suggestion was that perhaps some of these routes would be better serviced by buses.

It was regarded as important that any review of Community Transport schemes should be undertaken alongside the review of subsidies for public transport to ensure isolated communities are not disadvantaged. The need to balance reductions in public transport subsidies overall with reductions in community transport grants was highlighted.



## **Can we further review support for Voluntary Organisations provided through ECS?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

The Citizens' Panel were not asked any particular questions regarding reviewing support for voluntary organisations supported through ECS.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

21 separate comments were received on the proposal to:

***'Review the support provided for Voluntary Organisations by the Education, Culture and Sport Service.***

Most comments were generated from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaires and also from Community Councils.

#### **Views in favour**

The views of respondents on the issue of support for voluntary organisations were divided. There was support for a reduction in the level of support and it was noted that a 10% reduction across all organisations would be preferable. However an alternative view was that any reduction should be targeted on specific organisations, perhaps ones that can generate their own income, for example Eden Court. A further suggestion was that only organisations providing arts or cultural activities should receive a reduction in funding, the rationale for this being that people can pay to use these service.

#### **Views against**

The alternative view was that voluntary organisations should not be asked to reduce their budgets. The value of these services within communities was noted, alongside that many alternative sources of funding have already been cut. Concerns were expressed at the potential impact upon individuals and communities and that there could be a disproportionate effect should even a 10% cut be applied to small organisations. On principle it was noted that there should be not reduction to voluntary budgets at a time when they are being asked to contribute more locally.

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