

# **HIGHLAND BUDGET CONSULTATION ANALYSIS**

## **LOOKING AT OUR RESOURCES – STAFF AND BORROWING**

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## **Review Secondary timetabling methods, curriculum delivery methods and review teacher entitlement formulae.**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to secondary timetabling and curriculum delivery methods.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

27 separate comments were received on the question of saving on Secondary School teacher salaries and posts. Specifically we are looking to

***'Review timetabling and use of technology in secondary schools to support delivery of the curriculum at a time when pupil and teacher numbers will decrease in a number of schools.'***

Most comments were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail and submission of the electronic questionnaire. One ward forum provided views. Organisations expressing views were the Gairloch Parent Council and four rural community councils.

Opinion varied on the question of reducing teacher numbers, increasing certain class sizes and making greater use of ICT.

#### **Views against**

Those opposing the proposal did so for two main reasons, firstly because for them education should be protected from savings as a priority service or secondly, because they felt rural schools would be disadvantaged as their class sizes are already small and the need for higher pupil : teacher ration would threaten their viability. They felt that the proposal would make it even more difficult to attract and retain good teachers to small schools. Others felt that teacher posts could be protected if the savings could be directed elsewhere in schools, with secondary class-room assistants, a pay freeze for teachers and reducing school management costs all suggested as alternatives. Others felt that the increase from 20 to 33 pupils per teacher was too big an increase and suggested 26 pupils to 1 teacher in S1 and S2 English and Maths as a more acceptable change.

#### **Views in favour**

Those in favour of the proposal felt that teacher productivity should be increased with more classroom contact time for teachers or that they doubted pupil performance would be affected if class sizes were to increase. Others felt that while class sizes could increase, that a maximum of 28 pupils should be set (instead of the proposed 33) or that where it was required more teaching auxiliary support could be used to support learning in bigger classes.

#### **Further views**

Those undecided or not expressing a clear opinion pointed to the need to consider the context of each school rather than setting a ratio of pupils to teachers to apply to all schools. Circumstances such as social deprivation and size of schools were seen to be important, with the proposal seen likely to work only for larger schools. Another view was that quality of teaching was more important than teacher numbers. Concern was expressed also about the

increase from 20 to 33 pupils to each teacher and suggestions of a mid point or 25 pupils were proposed instead. An alternative view was to teach subjects on a modular basis rather than spreading the teaching throughout the school year if that might reduce costs. Others expressed concern that the proposal may not be viable if technology is not improved or that the impact of the proposal would be to undermine the Curriculum for Excellence or make classroom discipline harder.

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## **Reduce Nursery Co-ordinator Teacher staffing in line with service rationalisation**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reducing Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

24 separate comments were received on the question of  
***'Can we reduce Nursery Co-ordinator Teacher staffing proportionately, in line with the reducing number of 3 and 4 year olds.'***

Most comments were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail and submission of the electronic questionnaire. Organisations expressing views were the Gairloch Parent Council and four rural community councils.

#### **Views in favour**

A strong theme from those responding was that in principle it seemed reasonable to reduce staffing where the need for nursery education provision was falling. However it is not evident that those responding in this way currently use this service, or have awareness of the Council's duty to provide it. Some comments appear to confuse nursery education provision with child care in general and some view 3 and 4 year olds as too young to be in school anyway.

#### **Views against**

An opposing view was that preschool provision was the most important in influencing development and that more information would be needed on the impact for those affected before decisions should be made.

#### **Alternative views**

Of those undecided on the proposal other options were suggested to make a saving and included: greater use of volunteers or charitable organisations; including nursery children within the primary 1 class; and freeing up teaching time by reducing bureaucracy.

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## **Can we reduce peripatetic janitor support to small primary schools?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reducing peripatetic janitor support to small primary schools.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

26 comments were received on the question of:

***'Can we reduce peripatetic janitor support to small primary schools?'***

Most comments were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail and submission of the electronic questionnaire by individuals. Organisations expressing views were the Gairloch Parent Council and four rural community councils.

In general there was support for the proposal to remove the peripatetic janitor service. It was reported that as not all schools have access to any provision, it would only be fair to remove the service. It was suggested that it could be provided either by teachers or other Council staff within Housing and Property services.

However there were some concerns expressed at the impact upon small schools, who already have limited resources, and that a central service would be likely to be less cost effective. It was noted that many janitors provide a service beyond the terms of their contracts and that this element would be lost.

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

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## **Can we reduce the number of Quality Development Officers?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reducing the number of quality development officers.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

22 separate comments were received on the proposal to:

***'Reduce the number of quality development officers by 2.'***

Most comments received were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail, the blog and submission of the electronic questionnaire. One rural ward forum, a parent Council and two rural community councils provided views.

A strong theme emerging was the lack of any knowledge of the role of Quality Improvement Officers and concern about the high costs associated with them. On this basis their value was questioned and the proposal was seen to be acceptable, and for some not going far enough. Alternative views were 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.

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## **Can we reduce funding for covering teaching absence?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reducing funding for covering teaching absence.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

23 separate comments were received on the question of:

***'Can we reduce funding for covering teaching absence?'***

All comments received were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail, the blog and submission of the electronic questionnaire. Two rural community councils provided views.

A range of views was expressed in response to this question.

#### **Views in favour**

Where there was agreement with the proposal, respondents did not provide their reasons. Others felt able to provide conditional agreement with the proposals in that cover should still be provided for absence arising from long term illness, so reductions would be acceptable only for short periods of absence. Others felt a reduction in cover would have to be limited to only those schools with non-teaching Head teachers.

Others queried whether it is possible to reduce cover, especially in small schools if it meant that pupils would be sent home or if it meant classes would be unsupervised. Another theme was that there was a need for good absence management to be put in place to make sure staff were not abusing their working terms and conditions.

#### **Views against**

Those opposing the proposal did so on the grounds of:

- equity (other professional staff have cover arrangements, e.g. GPs, pilots, bus and train drivers) to ensure service continues and pupils should receive the same service;
- concern that pupils would be disadvantaged;
- the view that education should be protected from budget reductions as a priority service.

Another view expressed was for planned absence, e.g. through training courses, to be reduced for resources to be targeted to essential cover.



## **Can we reduce expenditure to support early years staff qualifications?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reducing funding to support early years staff qualifications.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

24 separate comments were received on the proposal to:

***'Reduce expenditure to support early years staff qualifications.'***

Most comments were written and generated from internet contact by e-mail and submission of the electronic questionnaire. Organisations expressing views were the Gairloch Parent Council and four rural community councils.

A strong theme from those responding was that in principle it seemed reasonable to reduce staffing where the need for nursery education provision was falling. However it is not evident that those responding in this way currently use this service, or have awareness of the Council's duty to provide it. Some comments appear to confuse nursery education provision with child care in general and some view 3 and 4 year olds as too young to be in school anyway.

An opposing view was that preschool provision was the most important in influencing development and that more information would be needed on the impact for those affected before decisions should be made.

Of those undecided on the proposal other options were suggested to make a saving and included: greater use of volunteers or charitable organisations; including nursery children within the primary 1 class; and freeing up teaching time by reducing bureaucracy.

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## **Overnight provision in Children's Units**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to overnight provision in children's units.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

12 separate responses were received regarding the proposal to  
***Change the way that overnight provision is provided in children's units.***

There was overall support for the proposal, with most respondents noting that if the practice already operates elsewhere in Highland then this model should be followed.

It was noted that safety issues should be considered prior to implementation and also the needs of individual residents.

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## **Review the burial administration function for the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Area**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing the burial administration function for Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

18 separate comments were received on the question of

***'Reviewing the burial administration function and consolidating this in Inverness.'***

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

Respondents were overall supportive of the proposal to consolidate the burial administration function in Inverness. The general view was 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. Respondents 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.

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## **Review staffing levels for Environmental Health**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to environmental health staffing.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

27 separate comments were received on the question of:

***'Reducing the levels of staffing/service within Environmental Health by two members of staff.'***

Most comments were generated from on-line contact either by e-mail or completing the on-line questionnaire. Views were expressed also by letter and at a ward forum. While most comments were made by individuals, one community council and the Department of Public Health in NHS Highland also responded.

Opinion was divided among those supporting the proposal, those against the proposal and those undecided.

#### **Views in favour**

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. These were seen to be food and water hygiene with less resource suggested for workplace, air and contaminated land inspections.

#### **Views against**

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. A strong and evidenced plea from the Department of Public Health in NHS Highland focused on the importance of food safety and the need to avoid and respond quickly to food poisoning outbreaks. It made the following points:

- The service is seen as overstretched already following previous reductions and that this was evident from some emergency outbreaks / incident situations (e.g The Marco Polo cruise ship norovirus outbreak and the Applecross campsite e coli O157 outbreak).
- The current difficulty the service has to inspect all food premises in terms of the FSA Framework Agreement.
- The risk of the Council being able to deal with future serious foodborne disease outbreaks such as e coli O157, especially as 21 cases of E Coli O157 and over 60 cases of salmonella food poisoning have occurred in the Highlands in the last two years.
- Concerns that with the large number of private water supplies in the area there are likely to be waterborne outbreaks of these infections as well.

- Concerns that reducing staff would compromise the Council's ability and duties under the Public Health Scotland Act of 2008 and recently signed Joint Health Protection Plan with NHS Highland.
- A view that workload will grow in this area as a result of new legislation due out imminently on port health and international health.
- Prof Hugh Pennington<sup>1</sup> was quoted as follows: "Local authority environmental health teams work hard to prevent food safety problems. However we must ensure that the lessons from tragic incidents are learnt well and the necessary changes put in place to avoid recurrences. It is clear that high levels of public protection require adequately resourced environmental health services and this will become an increasing challenge as public sector budget cuts bite. We must make sure that local authorities can maintain adequate levels of well qualified and competent staff." The comments follow a nationwide survey of local government showing environmental health and consumer protection as councils' lowest priorities - despite a recent rise in the number of serious infectious disease outbreaks.

Others saw a difficulty with the proposal on the grounds of food safety too (large number of food retail outlets over a large geography) or because of the need to protect environmental quality in the Highlands and its value to the local economy with the need for tourists to be assured of safe and hygienic facilities.

#### Further views

Those undecided or expressing no opinion felt they needed more information on the impact of staff reductions or on the need for the service and whether that was likely to change. Others queried whether a reduction in two staff would have an impact on service delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Pennington is emeritus professor of bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen, and was chair of the Pennington Group enquiry into the Scottish E.coli outbreak of 1996 and as Chairman of the Public Inquiry into the 2005 outbreak of E.coli 0157 in South Wales.

## **Review of staffing levels for Trading Standards**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to trading standards staffing.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

23 separate comments were received on the question of  
***'Reducing the levels of staffing/service within Trading Standards by two members of staff.'***

Most comments were generated from internet contact by e-mail or submission of the electronic questionnaire. Views were fed back from two ward forums a community council and from the Joint Community Safety Tasking Group.

A range of views was found, although little detail was provided on the choices made.

#### **Views in favour**

Those favouring a reduction in staff and providing reasons for this choice 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.

#### **Views against**

Those 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.

The Joint Community Safety Tasking Group highlighted the value of the service to community safety including: fireworks licensing; tobacco sales; videos categorisation; smoking ban; alcohol trading; and scams. Further dialogue with the tasking group partners (Northern Constabulary, NHHSH and the Fire Service) was requested should the proposals proceed.

Others unsure about the proposals were either concerned about the impact on the service or queried what the impact would actually be.

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## **Review of overall staffing structure in the TEC Service**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing the TECS staffing structure.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

24 separate comments were received on the question of  
***'Reviewing the overall staffing structure within TEC services.'***

Most comments were generated from internet contact by e-mail, submission of the electronic questionnaire or through the blog. Views were fed back from one ward forum and three community councils.

A strong theme from the responses was to support the review of staffing overall. The reasons cited for this were:

- 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.
- Reviews should be ongoing business as public needs change, new methods emerge and greater use of ICT can be made for efficiency.

Others 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 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.

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## **Reviewing business processes in TEC services**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing business processes within TEC services.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

18 separate comments were received on the proposal to  
***'Review business processes in TEC services.'***

There was complete support for reviewing business process within TEC service. Respondents noted that there was a need to be more efficient and to reduce the number of staff overall. It was suggested that this kind of review should be ongoing and should happen across all Council services.

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## **Income generation opportunities in School Residences**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to income generation in school residences.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

18 comments were received on the proposal to

***'Explore income generation opportunities from school residences.'***

Comments were received from individuals.

There was general support for generating income from school residences over the school holidays. Respondents suggested that the Council should target visitors to the area but that there was also potential for courses and conferences. A further suggestion was that in addition to school residences, class rooms and sports fields could also be hired out over the holiday period. One respondent did note that there was a need to look at the implications of this proposal prior to implementation.

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## **Should we review all income streams for TEC services?**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to income streams for TEC services.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

20 comments were received in relation to the question of:

***'Should we review all income streams for TEC services?'***

All responses to this question were received electronically, by e-mail, internet questionnaire or on the blog.

Overall responses were in favour of all income streams in TECs being reviewed, with a view that this should be done routinely anyway. Car parking charges and charging for public toilets as income streams were proposed. Savings in fleet costs were also suggested by outsourcing 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. Cutting budgets for Gaelic signage was also suggested.

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## **Reviewing Council owned air strips**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing Council owned air strips.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

25 comments were received in relation to the question of:

***'Can we dispose of Council owned air strips?'***

Most responses to this question were received electronically, by e-mail, internet questionnaire or on the blog with contributions made from the Inverness wards forum.

Generally selling the airstrips was favoured, with some respondents querying their purpose in Council ownership. This view was tempered by another that sales should be conditional on their use as air strips being retained in case of emergencies, with the Skye airstrip left in Council ownership for medical emergencies. Retaining airstrips and generating income was also acceptable to respondents, with suggestions for income including developing them for private aviation use or as space to be hired for driving instruction.

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## **Review temporary mortuary facilities at Glen Nevis, Fort William**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing temporary mortuary facilities at Glen Nevis, Fort William

### **Qualitative Analysis**

16 separate comments were received on the question of:

***'Reviewing the temporary mortuary facilities at Glen Nevis with a view to closing them.'***

Most comments were generated from individuals via the blog, email and on-line questionnaire. Comments were also received from specific groups including Community Councils and the Community Safety Steering Group.

All respondents to the question on reviewing temporary mortuary facilities were supportive of closing the facility and consolidating the service within Belford and Raigmore hospitals. It was noted however that it would be important to consider whether the Belford had the capacity to absorb this service provision.

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## **Review provision of vehicle workshops including options for amalgamation**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing vehicle workshops.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

21 separate comments were received on the question of:

***'Reviewing the provision of vehicle workshops with a view to consolidating provision in Inverness.'***

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

Respondents were generally supportive of the proposal to consolidate the three vehicle workshops into one central location within Inverness. It was noted however that any change must not impact upon service provision, one specific example being winter maintenance. 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. It was noted that the proposal to consolidate must make savings.

Kingussie Community Council noted specific concerns regarding the Kingussie workshop. Whilst agreeing with consolidating Inverness and Dingwall, they were against the suggestion to do the same Kingussie. Concern was expressed at the distance between Badenoch and Inverness, especially during the winter months when bad weather could prevent vehicles getting to Inverness to be repaired and therefore impacting upon local service provision.

An alternative suggestion to the one proposed was that the vehicle workshop service should be outsourced.

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## **Review provision of materials stores including options for external provision**

### **Quantitative Analysis**

No questions were asked of the Citizens' Panel in relation to reviewing materials stores.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

16 separate comments were received on the question of:

***'Reviewing the provision of materials stores with a view to reducing the number and utilising external suppliers.'***

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

There was strong support from respondents for the proposal reduce the number of materials stored and also the use of external suppliers. It was 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.

One respondent did note concern that a 'just in time' supplier would not work in rural areas given the limited number of suppliers available.

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