

The Independent Group are pleased that the following budget savings for 2015/16 contained in booklet A have been removed or delayed :

		£000
C&L/42	1% cut to teaching staff	£400
D&I/11	Cut to Rangers service	£48
C&L/55	Cut to the quality of schools meals	£123
C&L/5	Cut to foster and adoption budget	£3
CS/28	Cuts to 3 rd sector for waste services	£50
Total removed		£624

However we are still concerned about the following savings that are still being proposed

		£000
CS/24a	Cut to pre treatment of roads	£120
CS/24b	Cut to winter maintenance	£240
CS/36a	Charging for Sunday car parking	£95
Total		£455

We propose that the above proposals are removed and compensatory funding for £455,000 comes instead from the following savings:

	£000
Cut the use of external consultants	£250
Reduction in Carbon Clever programme – capital and revenue	£135
Review Area Committees	£39
Further reduction in the procurement department	£30
Independent Group senior councils – voluntary cut of 4% to any pay enhancement	£1
Total	£455

We also wish to express extreme concern and caution around the following proposals for 2016/17 onwards and ask that they are not accepted or agreed until more information on the long term implications are researched and discussed.

CS/ 7a-d Burials and Cremations

More detailed work needs to be done in consultation with communities, funeral directors and ministers to understand the impact.

CS/33 Horticulture – work and discussions needed on this. These are low paid jobs, some for people with additional support needs.

C&L/42 -1% cut to teaching staff - need to understand impact of curricular delivery and choice especially in smaller schools

C&L/24 Increase in schools meals of 40% over 4 years .. this will hit families dramatically and there are huge risks around the implications to the services including less uptake due to costs.

C&L/25 Review of cleaning services – need to understand impact on specifications as well as equalities impact

C&L/28 School lets – need to understand the impact on community groups and users

C&L/34 Removal of over entitlement - need to monitor impact of the 2015/16 cut especially in smaller schools before we agree any more changes

C&L/41 Standardised Timetable - need to monitor impact of the 2015/16 cut especially in smaller schools before we agree any more changes

C&L 43 Use of more technology to deliver curriculum - - extreme caution and prudence around the impact of this on children's learning. We cannot disadvantage a whole generation of pupils by the use of inappropriate curriculum delivery methods. This should be piloted, monitored closely and stopped immediately if adverse effects are noted. There should be an enormous amount of work done on this and no teacher posts should be cut before we know the outcome of any pilot or monitoring. Consultation on the pilot should include with teachers, parents and most importantly pupils. The following areas for review include

C&L 48 – Work needs to begin immediately to understand the impact on individual community groups for this cut. The impact on other groups and the whole communities must also be understood.

We therefore propose that work starts immediately on the 2016/17 onwards budget and reviewing of policies or reports are brought to service committees for discussion but only agreed at Highland Council as part of a budget setting. We want to ensure each issue is explored thoroughly and with enough time to do that work – and impact on communities is clearly understood and explored.

We also feel that there should be no 'no go' areas to be explored for savings and every part of the Council's work should be up for review. Areas to be looked at include:

- Sell off Glenurquhart Road site and move staff to other city centre locations and de-centralise work into the rural areas (eg to service points) possibly sustaining rural jobs.
- Sell off the Inverness Crematorium.
- Lobby Scottish government to allow the ceiling on planning fees to be raised - eg: around large renewable applications, so the costs to HC are covered.
- Thoroughly review all departments such as audit, procurement, policy and press/media - -and lobby Scottish government to insist that LAs and other CPP partners share such services where savings can be achieved.
- Complete review of gaelic
- Drive down the costs of overnight stays