

Item 12 - Question Time

To the Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee

“Official Highland Council guidance indicates that, unless extended, successful Community Asset Transfer requests should be completed by the Local Authority within a nine months’ timeframe.

The Thurso Heritage Society, whose asset transfer request of the former Pavilion building on Beach Road was agreed in 2018, have waited over a year and a half for their transfer to be conducted, with our service citing significant pressures on our legal staff.

Given that as a result of the delays the Thurso Heritage Society have been unable to apply for appropriate funding or begin work on making the pavilion their permanent home, what reassurances can the Administration give that the Highland Council has the commitment and the capacity required to process worthy requests in line with our own published guidance?”

Response to Mr S Mackie

The ongoing sustainable use of assets by transfer to community groups is a Council priority as it can both relieve the Council of financial liability and empower Local Communities.

It is acknowledged that the Pavilion at Beach Road, Thurso asset transfer has gone beyond the timescales set down in the statutory rules relating to asset transfers. This has largely been due capacity and high-volume caseloads within Legal Services. To improve the situation, a bid has been submitted to the change fund for approval at today’s meeting. The employment of a further two solicitors will create capacity to deal more quickly with community asset transfers and property related matters.