

**Highland Council: Questions: 15 May 2025****Member Questions****1. Mr A Christie****To the Leader of the Council**

Please could the Leader detail the number, nature (e.g. bullying and harassment, relationship with managers or colleagues, unrealistic workloads, working conditions, disputes over pay, benefits or terms and conditions etc), categorisation by Department including the outcome and corrective actions taken for all Staff Grievances received in 2022/23, 2023,24 and 2024/25?

**2. Mr A Christie****To the Leader of the Council**

Please could you detail the procedure and guidance (whether finalised or still in draft) that will be used as part of the Chief Executive performance appraisal process and how that may differ from the Assistant Chief Executives appraisal process?

**3. Mr M Reiss****To the Leader of the Council**

Is Highland Council achieving, in the current financial year, the “standstill figure” for roads maintenance works across the council area?

**4. Ms K Willis****To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

Last summer the bus service was reduced in Fort William, and the two new housing developments in Upper Achintore and on the Blar still do not have a bus service. Following the Councils recent acquisition of 64 buses, please can the Chair advise when buses will be made available to provide a bus service that meets the needs of residents in the Fort William area?

**5. Mr A Baldrey****To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

With the amendments proposed by the Council to Decriminalised Parking Enforcement (DPE) areas on Highland trunk roads expected to come into effect this summer, how many new parking enforcement officers does the Council plan to recruit across Highland?

**6. Mr A Baxter**

**To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

Following the closure of the Highland Council's Visitor Levy Consultation, can the Chair confirm whether the council administration's official position remains in support of the introduction of a local tourist levy, as set out by the Leader of the Highland Council, Councillor Raymond Bremner, in the press release issued on 25th May 2023, in which he stated:

"The Highland Council has long supported the idea of a tourist levy to enable the local authority to invest in local infrastructure and is a commitment in our Council Programme. The introduction of the Bill is good news and means we can now plan for the introduction of this local levy following approval of the Bill by Parliament."

If there has been any change in the administration's position or its plans for the implementation of the levy following the consultation, can the Chair provide details of how the implementation plan has been revised, the reasons for any changes, and what consultation feedback informed these revisions?"

**7. Mrs I Mackenzie**

**To the Leader of the Council**

Can the Council outline what specific actions are being taken to bring long-term empty homes back into use, and how these actions are being aligned with efforts to provide affordable housing specifically for key workers across both the public and private sectors in Highland, so we can help support recruitment, retention, and community sustainability?

**8. Mr R MacKintosh**

**To the Chair of Communities and Place**

How much has the Highland Council managed to reduce its Glyphosate usage compared with last year?

**9. Mr D Macpherson**

**To the Leader**

The Highland Council declared a Housing Challenge in 2024 and held a Housing Summit, while other Scottish local authorities declared a Housing Emergency.

Creating adequate affordable housing for the population it serves, in our city and towns and also in our remote and rural communities is the key to addressing the depopulation of the Highlands and Islands that our region is currently experiencing.

How many second homes are there in the Highland Council area by Ward, and how much money is generated for the Council in second home Council Tax charges?

**Motions: 15 May 2025**

1. The Council notes that both UK and Scottish Governments have recently issued guidance on the use of mobile phones in schools, enabling increased monitoring and improved management. The Highland Council has a good record of supporting and encouraging good digital and online practice.

The excessive use of mobile phones is a significant issue, and some studies suggest it can have the characteristics of addiction. This is particularly significant for children and young people in an educational context. We have a responsibility to reduce distraction and the potential for bullying and invasion of privacy. We believe a strong Council policy can support schools in introducing and implementing appropriate measures.

This Council instructs schools to consult on how best to ensure pupils' use of phone screen time does not adversely affect their learning. Chromebooks remove the need for phones as educational tools. Consulting the whole school community – school managers, parents, teachers and pupils – will ensure the development of policy at local level, in order to agree what the appropriate use of mobile phones should be for their particular areas. The Council further commits to give fulsome support to schools seeking to implement a ban on pupil use of phones during the school day.

**Signed:** Dr M Gregson      Mrs H Crawford

**Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:**

This motion is anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

The Scottish Government guidance on the use of mobile phones delegates the decision making to Head Teachers in consultation with their school communities. Consultation across the whole school estate would require additional staff resource, including legal guidance around how the UNCRC legislation could be met. This is not currently incorporated in the Revenue Budget. Such matters would require consideration as part of future budget planning.

All secondary schools across Highland have been asked to have a mobile phone policy position.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
Equality	Positive impact – young people
Poverty	No impact
Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights	Positive impact
Data Rights	No impact
Rural/Island	No impact
Climate Change	No impact

**Summary of Assessment:**

The motion proposes that schools undertake a consultation and that this would specifically include consulting with young people as part of that process. That would have a positive impact upon children's rights to have their views considered in matters that affect them.

The assessment does not consider the appropriate use of mobile phones and the impact of any reduction, as this would require to be part of any consultation. A screening for impact would be required as part of any change in policy at individual school level, reflecting specific school circumstances.

- At the beginning of April, the Scottish Government introduced free ferry travel for young islanders under 22 living on Orkney, Shetland, and the Outer Hebrides. Free ferry travel will help offset some of the extra costs and higher bills that families and young people living on islands already experience and encourage young people to continue living in their island communities.

This Council agrees to write to the Scottish Government Cabinet Secretary for Transport requesting that young people living on the Small Isles (Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna) and Knoydart, which is only accessible by ferry, are also able to access free ferry travel within their Local Authority.

**Signed:** Ms K Willis                      Mr A Baldrey

**Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:**

This motion is **not** expected to have a direct financial implication for the Council.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
<b>Equality</b>	No direct impact
<b>Poverty</b>	No direct impact
<b>Human Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Children's Rights</b>	No direct impact
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Rural/Island</b>	No direct impact
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact

**Summary of Assessment:**

The motion seeks the Council to write to the Scottish Government therefore there is no direct impact as a result of the motion.

Should there be a change in policy as a result of the action, it is anticipated that there would be a likely positive impact upon young people, a positive socio-economic impact and a positive rural and island impact.