



## **AMENDMENT**

The Council will continue to work with Police Scotland and all other emergency services, where and whenever necessary, to ensure that all regionally important roads are opened as a key priority. Given this particular case and is a localised roads issue, this matter will be referred to Area Committee to enable local members to deal with local road priorities.

In addition, the Council commends the professionalism of our winter road maintenance teams, as well as all other emergency and essential services, recognises the way in which they undertake their roles, often at great personal risk, to keep our communities supported and safe. This is especially relevant during prolonged spells of severe winter weather, such as those events recently experienced in many parts of the Highlands.

**Signed:**            Mr K Gowans                            Mr J Finlayson                            Mr C Ballance

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

This amendment is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

### **Integrated Impact Assessment:**

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

### **Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. There is not anticipated to be any impact as a result of the amendment.

## 2. Accessible & Age-Appropriate Housing for Highland Motion

Highland Council recognises the urgent and growing housing needs of our ageing population and the importance of ensuring that people can live independently, safely and with dignity in their own homes for as long as possible.

Council notes the evidence from national experts, including the former Chair of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, who has stated that *“the housing needs of ageing tenants do not factor into planning policy”*, and wider research describing a *“policy blindness”* in spatial planning towards the needs of older and disabled people. Council further notes that current Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs) do not require local authorities to collect evidence on the need for accessible, adaptable, or single-storey homes, limiting our ability to require developers to provide them. This will risk undermining Highland’s ability to plan effectively for our ageing demographic.

Council acknowledges the Scottish Government’s Housing to 2040 commitments, including:

- the forthcoming Scottish Accessible Homes Standard,
- the ambition to future-proof all new homes,
- improved systems for adaptations, and
- the requirement for joined-up planning across housing, health and social care.

Council therefore Agrees to:

1. That a report be brought to the Housing and Property Committee setting out options for developing a Highland Accessible and Adaptable Housing Action Plan, ensuring that the housing needs of older and disabled people are fully reflected in future Housing Need and Demand Assessments (HNDAs), the Local Housing Strategy, and the next Local Development Plan.
2. To reaffirm our commitment to partnership working with NHS Highland and the Health and Social Care Partnership, ensuring that strategic planning for housing, care, support and independent living is properly aligned and integrated, in line with the principles of Housing to 2040.
3. To seek an update on preparations for the Scottish Accessible Homes Standard, ensuring that Highland is fully prepared to implement the new requirements as soon as national guidance is issued.
4. To request a progress report to Council within 12 months, including clear recommendations on future policy development, development planning, and partnership arrangements.

**Signed:** Mrs I MacKenzie  
Mrs A MacLean

Mrs B Jarvie

Mr R Stewart

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

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a direct financial implication to the Council. There will be officer time and opportunity cost associated with work to produce the report and options as outlined. Subject to a report and options being prepared and considered, and any recommendations that may arise from that report,

and were they to be progressed, could represent potentially significant financial implications to be considered. These could only be assessed and considered at that point in time, and for any consequence there may be for future housing or other Council budgets.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

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

**Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. The motion seeks agreement to bring forward a report on setting out options for the development of an accessible and adaptable housing action plan. The motion therefore has no direct impact although the potential outcomes of the report are likely to be positive, from both an equalities and socio-economic perspective. Any report would need to set out the impacts from any options being considered.

**AMENDMENT**

Highland Council recognises the growing housing needs of our ageing population but also individuals of all ages who require accessible and adaptable housing. It is important to ensure that people of all ages can live independently, safely and with dignity in their own homes, for as long as possible.

Given this growing need, the Council is already taking action to ensure that people can live independently and well within their local communities. The Council welcomes the work already underway and planned to understand, evidence and respond to this need. This includes:

- The new Housing Need Demand Assessment which, whilst still being finalised, has included a particular focus on the need for specialist housing including housing for older people and enabling independent living
- The HNDA evidence will be used to update the Strategic Housing Investment Plan and the Local Housing Strategy, which will specifically consider the need for specialist housing
- Through the Health and Social Care Partnership, the Adult Strategic Plan focuses on enabling people to remain in their own houses and communities, with the appropriate housing and care in place.

- The Lochaber Care Model which will consider developing different models of accommodation to enable people to live independently within their communities
- The current housing allocations policy which places a stronger weighting on the need for accessible housing – the new HNDA will inform the current review of the allocations policy
- The £1m HRA capital adaptations budget to enable existing HRA properties to be adapted.
- The Council's Build Programme already complies with the Housing for Varying Needs Standard (which would be part of the Scottish Accessible Housing Standard)
- The Council's Build Programme goes beyond the Housing for Varying Needs Standard and on most sites delivers 20% wheelchair accessible (standard 10%). For most ground floor properties, the Council goes beyond the Housing for Varying Needs Standard to improve accessibility.

Building on this body of work, working with our partners in NHS Highland and the Health and Social Care Partnership, the Council commits to bringing forward a Highland Accessible and Adaptable Housing Strategy to the Housing and Property committee, which will build on the work already in place and planned.

**Signed:** Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair Mrs S Atkin

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

This amendment is **not** anticipated to have a direct financial implication to the Council.

There will be officer time associated with work to produce the Strategy.

Any financial implication which may arise from the strategy or resulting projects or proposals, could only be assessed and considered at that point in time, and for any consequence there may be for future housing or other Council budgets.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
<b>Equality</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The development of an Accessible and Adaptable Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact on people with disabilities of all ages and older people requiring adaptive housing.
<b>Poverty</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The development of an Accessible and Adaptable Housing Strategy is likely to have a positive impact, setting out routes for accessing adaptations to housing across all tenures, including those on lower incomes.

<b>Human Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Children's Rights</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> An accessible and adaptable housing strategy is likely to have a positive impact on young people requiring adaptive housing.
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Rural/Island</b>	No impact
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact

**Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. The amendment proposes the development of an Accessible and Adaptive Housing Strategy which is anticipated to have a positive impact from an equalities, socio-economic and children rights perspective. As part of the development of any strategy, an impact assessment would be required.

### 3. The Council notes:

## MOTION WITHDRAWN

- That Highland Council's Numeracy and Literacy Attainment figures still lag behind the national average in all areas and have declined in all but two categories.
- SQA results in S4, S5 and S6 have consistently been disappointing, and well behind national averages.
- The Council has attributed disappointing Secondary Educational Attainment data to Covid, Rurality, defective Primary Teacher judgements, and even unnecessarily negative comments by Councillors seeking to scrutinise the performance of the Service.
- In a context where Scotland's place in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) tables has declined, many in Scottish Education have reassessed the Curriculum and its effectiveness.
- Education Scotland's Annual Action Plan, published in July 2025, firmly places the Curriculum as the primary focus for reform.
- Educationalists have, for some time, warned of "an overemphasis on skills and sidelining of knowledge" (Professor Sue Ellis).
- Curricular refocusing on the importance of Knowledge is already boosting attainment and achievement in many authorities, with key indicators such as the percentage of pupils achieving 5 or more level 6 qualifications in S5, and the percentage of S4 pupils achieving 5 or more level 5 qualifications showing huge improvements.

The Council therefore resolves:

- That the Curriculum for Excellence is not serving Scotland's teachers, pupils or parents as well as it should or could.
- That we need an enhanced conception of the 4 Capacities (Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, and Effective Contributors).
- That 'Powerful Knowledge' (Michael Young, Zongyi Deng and others) should be recognised as central to Education, and not subordinate, but complementary to Skills.
- That Highland Council's Education Service should take cognisance of such current research evidence, as well as the Education Scotland refocusing the Curriculum as the prime driver of the Educational process. In consequence, the Highland Council's *Education Improvement Plan* and *Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy* should be reframed, and Officers and Staff should be empowered to advance the agenda accordingly.

**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.

There would be forecast financial costs associated with research and consultancy to progress aspects of the motion. It is incumbent upon the Local Authority to comply with national guidelines, deliver the prescribed core curriculum areas (literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, and RME), and uphold national assessment standards. The motion may introduce a risk that the service may deviate from the

expectations articulated by the Scottish Government, which could have the potential for implications for grant funding arrangements given there have been “directions” from Scottish Government around aspects of the grant funding settlement for education.

Taking each resolution in turn.

- The resolution that the Curriculum for Excellence is not serving Scotland’s teachers, pupils or parents as well as it should or could.

No financial implications

- The resolution that we need an enhanced conception of the 4 Capacities (Successful Learners, Confident Individuals, Responsible Citizens, and Effective Contributors).

The Financial implication is estimated to be in the region of £20k for Consultancy Resource to conduct research & develop proposals.

- The resolution that ‘Powerful Knowledge’ (Michael Young, Zongyi Deng and others) should be recognised as central to Education, and not subordinate, but complementary to Skills.

No financial implications

- The resolution that Highland Council’s Education Service should take cognisance of such current research evidence, as well as the Education Scotland refocusing the Curriculum as the prime driver of the Educational process. In consequence, the Highland Council’s Education Improvement Plan and Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy should be reframed, and Officers and Staff should be empowered to advance the agenda accordingly.

The financial implications of transitioning from the national curriculum to an alternative methodology may present a risk to future grant funding settlements given the extent of Scottish Government “direction” around education funding. This risk would require careful evaluation following the initial research and the proposals flowing from resolution 2, together with the subsequent development of recommendations, to ensure fully informed policy decision making.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
<b>Equality</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The motion will have a positive equality impact provided the curriculum changes are designed and implemented inclusively.
<b>Poverty</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i>

	With strong alignment to the Scottish Attainment Challenge and careful mitigation, the motion can contribute to reducing poverty-related educational inequalities.
<b>Human Rights</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The motion is likely to enhance rights-based educational practice, provided implementation includes genuine stakeholder engagement and equitable access for all learners.
<b>Children's Rights</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The motion enhances children's rights by improving educational quality and requiring stronger, more meaningful involvement of children and young people in shaping curriculum changes.
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The motion itself does not introduce new data processing, so there will be no impact on GDPR requirements
<b>Rural/Island</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> With targeted planning and consultation, the motion can support greater equity across rural and island settings, but proactive mitigation is essential to avoid uneven access or unintended disadvantage. Rural and island schools may experience reduced subject availability, staffing constraints, and inconsistent digital connectivity, which could affect equitable implementation of a revised curriculum.
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> The climate impact is neutral, there are no direct emissions consequences.

### Summary of Assessment

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. The motion is expected to have an overall positive impact on equity, poverty reduction, rural/island access, provided these factors are front-and-centre of the design of the revised curriculum.

4. Highland Council welcomes and celebrates the £2 cap on bus fares across the Highlands introduced by the Scottish Government and effective from this Monday, the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, resolves to promote the reduced price regularly on its social media, and expresses the wish that any future Scottish Government will continue support for this beyond the one year pilot.

**Signed:** Mr C Ballance

Mr R MacKintosh

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

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

<b>Area for Assessment</b>	<b>Assessment Summary</b>
<b>Equality</b>	No impact
<b>Poverty</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> Promotion of the new fare cap is anticipated to have a positive impact on users experiencing financial hardship and who may benefit from the fare cap.
<b>Human Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Children's Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Rural/Island</b>	Positive impact  <i>Summary of assessment:</i> Promotion of the new fare cap is anticipated to have a positive impact on users experiencing financial hardship, and in particular for users in rural areas, who may benefit from the fare cap.
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact

**Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. This highlights the potential for positive impact as a result of the motion, related to the promotion of the new fare cap.

## 5. Council notes:

- Buses can play a big part in improving social equity and inclusion. A significant proportion of the Highland population does not have access to a car, including young people, the elderly, and lower-income households.
- Reliable bus services are more than just a convenience; they are a critical piece of infrastructure, enabling people to access shops and services, which may be located on the outskirts of towns.
- Reliable buses provide a modal shift, giving residents a realistic alternative to driving.
- For many, the bus is a lifeline to medical appointments or social services.
- A well-run bus service enables societal inclusion. Without regularity and reliability, many people face transport poverty, where they are effectively cut off from the community. This disproportionately affects lower-income households.
- A well-run bus service can service and enhance our Highland Tourism and Hospitality economy. Tourists arriving by train or plane need reliable local transport to reach sites like Culloden Battlefield and Loch Ness. And efficient bus links help manage the seasonal surge of visitors, preventing rural roads and city parking spots from becoming overwhelmed during the summer months.
- One double-decker bus can potentially take 75 cars off the road, and can thereby significantly reduce emissions and congestion, and contribute to Climate Change targets.
- Cost savings achieved by taking services In-house: services previously externally awarded at £4,191,805, now replaced by a cost per annum of £2,400,000.

## Council welcomes:

- The work undertaken since January 2023 by the Council In-House Bus Service, in improving bus services, providing school contract services, public transport services and supporting education hires.
- This reflects excellent use of Section 22 Permits and the Bus Partnership Fund.
- Growth in In-house Bus Passenger numbers to 135,839 in 2025.
- Plans for a new operating model for bus services in the future, utilising ScotZeb 2 funding to meet the Council's Strategic objectives and align with the Local Transport Strategy.
- The formation of an In-house Officer Group to work towards a Highland Bus Operation, and potentially an Arm's Length External Organisation.

**Signed:** Dr M Gregson

Mrs T Robertson

## Section 95 Officer assessment of financial implications:

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

## Integrated Impact Assessment:

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
Equality	No impact
Poverty	No impact
Human Rights	No impact

<b>Children's Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Rural/Island</b>	No impact
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact

### **Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. The motion welcomes a range of work that is underway in relation to the growth of the Council's in-house bus service. Whilst there are a range of positive impacts in relation to the development of the in-house bus operation, the motion does not propose any new actions and therefore there is no impact as a result of the motion.

### **AMENDMENT**

This council congratulates the in-house bus team on the progress that has been made in the development and provision of a reliable in-house public transport operation and their dedication and commitment to deliver a key commitment for this council.

This Council notes:

- Buses make significant contribution towards improving social equity, inclusion by creating opportunities for social interaction that help to develop social capital.
- Reliable bus services are a critical piece of infrastructure, enabling people to access shops and services, which may be located on the outskirts of our city, towns and settlements.
- Reliable buses provide a modal shift, giving residents a realistic alternative to driving and other forms of transport.
- For many, the bus is a lifeline that helps reduce health poverty, increases social mobility, improving the quality of life and life chances for everyone throughout our communities, noting this councils puts people before profit.
- The provision of a reliable bus service is an investment in society itself and can be a significant contributor towards achieving net-zero carbon omissions targets for Highland.
- A local, trusted bus service can help boost the visitor economy and its future expansion by supporting rural connectivity as part of integrated transport solution.
- Cost savings achieved by taking services In-house: services previously externally awarded at £4,191,805, now replaced by a cost per annum of £2,400,000.
- This council will continue to support the development our in-house bus service and will enable additional financing to take advantage of expansion opportunities as these arise.

Council welcomes:

- The work undertaken since January 2023 by the Council In-House Bus Service, in improving bus services, providing school contract services, public transport services and supporting education hires.
- The broad support for Highland Council in-house bus services from elected members and the public at large.
- This reflects excellent use of Section 22 Permits and the Bus Partnership Fund.
- Growth in In-house Bus Passenger numbers to 135,839 in 2025.
- The ability of this council to mitigate removal or reductions of services from other operators
- Plans for a new operating model for bus services in the future, utilising ScotZeb 2 funding to meet the Council's Strategic objectives and align with the Local Transport Strategy.
- The formation of an In-house Officer Group to work towards a Highland Bus Operation and supports in principle the creation an Arm's Length External Organisation to manage our expanding bus fleet, going forward.
- The work being undertaken to provide sustainable community transport solutions to support rural communities, ensuring alignment with the public's this council's strategic transport plan.

**Signed:**            Mr K Gowans                            Mr C Ballance

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

This amendment is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

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

**Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. There is not anticipated to be any impact as a result of the amendment.

6. To incorporate Care Experience into the Integrated Impact Assessment Process to ensure that the impact on care experienced young people is considered alongside equality, poverty, children’s rights and rural/island.

Highland Council recognises:

- Our collective responsibility as corporate parents and our commitment to the delivery of ‘The Promise,’ that Scotland’s children and young people will grow up loved, safe, and respected.
- The Equalities Act 2010 confirms the significance in terms of protection, fairness and inclusion in all contexts of Protected Characteristics (Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Religion or Belief, Sexual Orientation, Marriage & Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy & Maternity).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Highland Council resolves:

- To add ‘Care Experience’ to our Equalities Impact Assessments where ‘Care Experienced’ is used to describe anyone who is currently, or has been, in the care system. For example, kinship care, looked after at home, foster care, residential care, secure homes, and adoption.
- To ensure that the impact on care experienced young people is considered alongside other impacts such as equality, poverty, children’s rights and rural/island.
- To continually and proactively seek out and listen to the voices of care experienced young people when developing new policies.
- That the addition of care experience within Impact Assessments would formally recognise the impact any future decisions, services, policies might have on care experienced people.

**Signed:** Dr M Gregson                      Mr C Ballance

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

This motion is **not** anticipated to have a financial implication to the Council. The incorporation of this additional impact assessment is however expected to have an increased officer time commitment.

**Integrated Impact Assessment:**

Area for Assessment	Assessment Summary
Equality	<p>Positive impact</p> <p><i>Summary of assessment:</i>            The motion could have a potential positive impact on those individuals who have protected characteristics but are also care experienced, noting that a number of care experienced young people have some form of disability. Introducing an assessment for care experience would assist in taking a more holistic approach to considering the needs of these young people.</p>

<b>Poverty</b>	<p>Positive impact</p> <p><i>Summary of assessment:</i> The motion could have a potential positive impact on care experienced young people who are experiencing financial hardship. Care experienced young people are more likely to experience poverty therefore introducing an assessment for care experience would assist in taking a more holistic approach to considering the needs of these young people.</p>
<b>Human Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Children's Rights</b>	<p>Positive impact</p> <p><i>Summary of assessment:</i> Care experienced young people have specific rights and an assessment which included this specifically would be a more inclusive approach to assessment of children's rights and ensuring that the authority has the edicts set out in the Promise at the heart of service delivery.</p>
<b>Data Rights</b>	No impact
<b>Rural/Island</b>	<p>Positive impact</p> <p><i>Summary of assessment:</i> A specific assessment for care experience could have a positive impact on children and young people living in rural/island communities as it would specifically consider how care experienced young people within these communities could be impacted as a result of any proposal.</p>
<b>Climate Change</b>	No impact

**Summary of Assessment:**

A summary of the integrated screening is outlined above. Overall, it is anticipated that the motion could have a positive impact across a number of the existing assessment strands as a result of taking a more holistic approach and considering the needs of care experienced young people.