How do we compare: Benchmarking

What is the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF)?

All 32 Scottish Councils are required to publish a set of performance indicators using the LGBF each year. This ensures that councils report standard information on the services they provide to local communities. The indicators were selected through a wide consultation process to cover major service areas.

Of the 89 LGBF indicators, The Highland Council is in the top quartile (ranked 1-8) for 19 indicators and in the bottom quartile (ranked 25-32) for 24 indicators. It should be noted that there are a wide range of factors that influence the performance of these indicators including geography, service delivery models and budget priorities.

Almost all the performance indicators have targets that we are trying to achieve.

Our current performance (2018/19 unless otherwise stated) for each indicator is shown using the following symbols:

Performance Targets

- ⭐ On Target
- 🟡 Within performance threshold
- 🔻 No Significant Progress

There are 27 indicators that we consider to be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). 21 of these are from the LGBF, and 6 are locally defined indicators. These are highlighted on the next few pages. 17 (63%) of these indicators are performing on target, 3 (11%) indicate 'Within Performance Threshold' in performance, and for 7 (26%) there is 'No Significant Progress' in improving performance.

A video on the performance of our Key Performance Indicators can be viewed online: **www.bit.ly/HighlandKPI2020**

Indicator Type

- 👍 Quality
- £ Cost

Children's Services

CHN1 - CHN23

CHN1 🟡
Spend on primary schools
£ per pupil
Highland £5,292

Family: £5,260
Scotland: £5,250
Target: Scottish Average

£ Ranked **17** of **32**

CHN2 ⭐
Spend on secondary schools
£ per pupil
Highland £7,104

Family: £7,212
Scotland: £7,185
Target: Scottish Average

£ Ranked **18** of **32**

CHN3 ⭐
Spend on pre-school education
£ per pre-school pupil
Highland £4,778

Family: £4,798
Scotland: £5,070
Target: Scottish Average

£ Ranked **16** of **32**

CHN4
KPI ▼

Secondary school pupils achieving
5 plus awards at SCQF level 5
%

Highland 59%

Family:	63%
Scotland:	63%
Target:	Rank 18

Ranked **24** of **32**

CHN5
▼

Secondary school pupils achieving
5 plus awards at SCQF level 6
%

Highland 30%

Family:	34%
Scotland:	35%
Target:	Rank 20

Ranked **24** of **32**

CHN6
KPI ★

Secondary school pupils from
deprived areas achieving
5 plus awards at SCQF level 5
%

Highland 35%

Family:	40%
Scotland:	44%
Target:	Rank 24

Ranked **22** of **32**

CHN7
★

Secondary school pupils from
deprived areas achieving
5 plus awards at SCQF level 6
%

Highland 12%

Family:	15%
Scotland:	18%
Target:	Rank 24

Ranked **22** of **32**

CHN8a

Spend on residential
accommodation for
'Looked After Children'
£ per child per week

Highland 3,3 9

2017/1 Figure

Family:	£3,268
Scotland:	£3,485
Target:	Scottish Average

Ranked **14** of **32**

CHN8b

Spend on providing
fostering/family placements for
'Looked After Children'
£ per child per week

Highland £ 97

2017/1 Figure

Family:	£303
Scotland:	£328
Target:	Scottish Average

Ranked **1** of **32**

CHN9

'Looked After Children' cared for
in foster/family placements
%

Highland 83.5%

2017/1 Figure

Family:	86.3%
Scotland:	89.7%
Target:	TBC

Ranked **26** of **32**

CHN10
★

Resident satisfaction with
local schools
%

Highland 75.7%

Family:	74.5%
Scotland:	71.8%
Target:	Scottish Average

Ranked **16** of **32**

CHN11
KPI

Pupils entering positive
destinations after school
%

Highland 96.0%

2017/1 Figure

Family:	94.9%
Scotland:	94.4%
Target:	Rank 8

Ranked **7** of **32**

CHN12a
KPI ▼

Overall attainment
Average tariff score

Highland 792

Family:	852
Scotland:	892
Target:	Rank 19

Ranked **28** of **32**

CHN12b
★

Attainment
SIMD Quintile 1
Average tariff score

Highland 492

Family:	577
Scotland:	625
Target:	Rank 24

Ranked **24** of **32**

CHN12c
▼

Attainment
SIMD Quintile 2
Average tariff score

Highland 575

Family:	658
Scotland:	740
Target:	Rank 24

Ranked **29** of **32**

CHN12d
▼

Attainment
SIMD Quintile 3
Average tariff score

Highland 789

Family:	825
Scotland:	872
Target:	Rank 18

Ranked **27** of **32**

CHN12e
▼

Attainment
SIMD Quintile 4
Average tariff score

Highland 907

Family:	968
Scotland:	1,013
Target:	Rank 24

Ranked **26** of **32**

CHN12f
▼

Attainment
SIMD Quintile 5
Average tariff score

Highland 1,006

Family:	1,088
Scotland:	1,193
Target:	Rank 22

Ranked **27** of **32**

CHN13a

Primary pupils achieving
expected level in literacy
%

Highland 57.9%

Family:	70.9%
Scotland:	72.3%
Target:	TBC

Ranked **32** of **32**

CHN13b

Primary pupils achieving expected level in numeracy
%

Highland 67.4%

Family: 77.0%
Scotland: 79.1%
Target: TBC

Ranked **32** of **32**

CHN14a

Primary pupils literacy attainment gap
%

Highland 31.1%

Family: 23.5%
Scotland: 20.7%
Target: TBC

Ranked **29** of **32**

CHN14b

Primary pupils numeracy attainment gap
%

Highland 25.2%

Family: 21.3%
Scotland: 16.8%
Target: TBC

Ranked **28** of **32**

CHN17

Children meeting developmental milestones (27-30 months)
%

Highland 63.7%

2017/1 Figure

Family: 76.0%
Scotland: 57.1%
Target: TBC

Ranked **25** of **32**

CHN18

Funded early years provision rated good or better
%

Highland 93.9%

Family: 89.3%
Scotland: 90.6%
Target: 92%

Ranked **13** of **32**

CHN19a

KPI

School attendance rate
%

Highland 92.8%

2018-19 Figure

Family: 93.3%
Scotland: 93.0%
Target: Rank 24

Ranked **21** of **32**

CHN19b

KPI

School attendance rate for Looked After Children
%

Highland 91.1%

2016-17 Figure

Family: 90.5%
Scotland: 91.0%
Target: TBC

Ranked **18** of **32**

CHN20a

School exclusion rate
per 1,000 pupils

ighland

2016-17 Figure

Family: 26.3
Scotland: 26.8
Target: TBC

Ranked **17** of **32**

CHN20b

School exclusion rate for Looked After Children
per 1,000 Looked After Children

ighland

2016-17 Figure

Family: N/A
Scotland: 80.0
Target: TBC

Ranked **20** of **32**

CHN21

16-19 year olds participating in learning, training or work
%

Highland 92.2%

Family: 92.8%
Scotland: 91.6%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **15** of **32**

CHN22

Child protection re-registrations within 18 months
%

ighland

2017/1 Figure

Family: 5.4%
Scotland: 6.1%
Target: Rank 8

Ranked **18** of **32**

CHN23

Looked After Children with more than one placement last year
%

Highland 27.6%

2017/1 Figure

Family: 23.0%
Scotland: 20.6%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **25** of **32**

KPI

Average number of Looked After Children accommodated outwith Highland

2017/18: 34

2018/19: 39

Target: 34

Corporate Asset

C-AST1 - C-AST2

C-AST1

KPI

Council buildings suitable for their current use
%

Highland 67.6%

Family: 79.1%
Scotland: 82.1%
Target: Family Average

Ranked **31** of **32**

C-AST2

Council buildings in a satisfactory condition
%

Highland 82.4%

Family: 84.5%
Scotland: 87.2%
Target: Family Average

Ranked **25** of **32**

Corporate Services

CORP1 - CORP8

CORP1 ▼
Council's total running costs spent on administrative support
%
Highland 7.6%

Family: 5.1%
Scotland: 4.4%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **31** of **32**

CORP3b ▼
Women in top 5% earners in the Council
%
Highland 50%

Family: 46%
Scotland: 56%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **25** of **32**

CORP3c ▼
Gender pay gap in the Council?
%
Highland 5.8%

Family: 7.0%
Scotland: 4.0%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **24** of **32**

CORP4 ★
Council spend on collecting council tax
£ per home
Highland £7.69

Family: £11.43
Scotland: £6.92
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **21** of **32**

CORP6a (KPI) 🟡
Sickness absence for teachers
Average number of days per teacher
Highland 7.11 days

Family: 7.06 days
Scotland: 6.21 days
Target: Rank 23

Ranked **24** of **32**

CORP6b (KPI) ★
Sickness absence in the Council?
Average number of days per employee (non-teachers)
Highland 10.50 days

Family: 11.52 days
Scotland: 11.49 days
Target: 10.6 days

Ranked **10** of **32**

CORP7 (KPI) ★
Council efficiency at collecting council tax
%
Highland 96.3%

Family: 96.7%
Scotland: 96.0%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **16** of **32**

CORP8 ★
Council efficiency at paying invoices on time
%
Highland 95.7%

Family: 91.2%
Scotland: 92.7%
Target: 95%

Ranked **10** of **32**

Housing Services

HSN1b - HSN5

HSN1b (KPI) ★
Rent owed to the council due to arrears (gross)
%
Highland 4.9%

Family: 7.1%
Scotland: 7.3%
Target: under 5%

Ranked **5** of **32**

HSN2 ★
Rent lost due to empty properties
%
Highland 0.8%

Family: 1.0%
Scotland: 1.0%
Target: 1.1%

Ranked **7** of **32**

HSN3 ★
Quality and standard of housing provided by the Council*
%
Highland 95.5%

Family: 95.7%
Scotland: 94.3%
Target: Scottish Average
*Measured by the Scottish Housing Quality Standard

Ranked **15** of **32**

HSN4b ▼
Time to complete non-emergency repairs
average number of days
Highland 7.2 days

Family: 8.8 days
Scotland: 7.8 days
Target: 6.6 days

Ranked **12** of **32**

HSN5 🟡
Energy efficiency of housing provided by the Council
%
Highland 95.5%

Family: 96.6%
Scotland: 97.5%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **21** of **32**

KPI ★
Average time to re-let homes
{days}
2017/18: 36.6
2018/19: 36.8
Target: 38.0

▼
Homelessness case duration
{days}
2017/18: 44
2018/19: 48
Target: 41

Adult Social Care Services

SW1 - SW8

SW1
Council spend on care to support older people to live at home
£ per hour
Highland £29.46

Family: £25.29
Scotland: £24.67
Target: TBC

Ranked **25** of **32**

KPI SW2
People that need support choose how their needs will be met
%
Highland 6.5%

Family: 5.1%
Scotland: 7.3%
Target: Rank 9

Ranked **7** of **32**

KPI SW3
Older people with long term care needs supported to remain at home
%
Highland 55.6%

Family: 60.2%
Scotland: 61.0%
Target: Rank 27

Ranked **26** of **32**

SW4b
Adults supported at home agree services had an impact in improving or maintaining their quality of life
%
Highland 85.7%
2017-18 Figure

Family: 78.1%
Scotland: 80.0%
Target: Rank 8

Ranked **4** of **32**

SW4c
Adults supported at home who agree that they are supported to live as independently as possible
%
Highland 86.4%
2017-18 Figure

Family: 81.2%
Scotland: 81.1%
Target: TBC

Ranked **2** of **32**

SW4d
Adults supported at home who agree they had a say in how their support was provided
%
Highland 79.2%
2017-18 Figure

Family: 74.4%
Scotland: 75.6%
Target: TBC

Ranked **8** of **32**

SW4e
Carers who feel supported to continue in their caring role
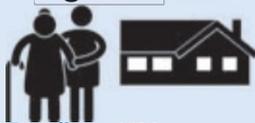**%**
Highland 37.5%
2017-18 Figure

Family: 35.7%
Scotland: 36.6%
Target: TBC

Ranked **17** of **32**

SW5
Council spend on residential care for older people
£ per week, per resident
Highland

Family: £438
Scotland: £381
Target: TBC

Ranked **29** of **32**

SW6
Rate of readmission to hospital within 28 days
per 1,000 discharges
Highland 113

Family: 100
Scotland: 103
Target: TBC

Ranked **25** of **32**

SW7
Care services graded "good" or "better"
%
Highland 86%

Family: 79%
Scotland: 82%
Target: TBC

Ranked **6** of **32**

SW8
Time people spend in hospital when they are ready for discharge
Days per 1,000 aged 75+
Highland 1,248

Family: 816
Scotland: 793
Target: TBC

Ranked **28** of **32**

Culture and Leisure Services

C&L1 - C&L5d

KPI C&L1
Council spend on sports and leisure facilities
£ per visit
Highland £1.64

Family: £2.37
Scotland: £2.62
Target: Rank 8

Ranked **7** of **32**

KPI C&L2
Council spend on libraries
£ per visit
Highland £1.58

Family: £2.79
Scotland: £2.05
Target: Rank 9

Ranked **9** of **32**

KPI C&L3
Council spend on museums and galleries
£ per visit
Highland £1.49

Family: £4.46
Scotland: £3.48
Target: Rank 16

Ranked **4** of **32**

C&L4
Council spend on parks and open spaces
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £1,303

Family: £15,232
Scotland: £20,174
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **3** of **32**

C&L5a
Satisfaction with local libraries
%
Highland 70.4%

Family: 71.0%
Scotland: 72.4%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **24** of **32**

C&L5b
Satisfaction with local parks and open spaces
%
Highland 78.9%

Family: 77.6%
Scotland: 84.8%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **27** of **32**

C&L5c
Satisfaction with local museums and galleries
%
Highland 57.4%

Family: 62.3%
Scotland: 69.3%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **24** of **32**

C&L5d
Satisfaction with local leisure facilities
%
Highland 69.9%

Family: 69.1%
Scotland: 71.4%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **19** of **32**

Economic Development
ECON1 - ECON10

ECON1
Unemployed people assisted into work by the Council
%
Highland 4.1%

Family: 9.5%
Scotland: 12.6%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **29** of **32**

ECON2
Cost per planning application
£
Highland £2,650

Family: £4,086
Scotland: £4,439
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **3** of **32**

KPI ECON3
Average time per Planning Application
weeks
Highland 10.6

Family: 9.2
Scotland: 9.1
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **24** of **32**

KPI ECON4
Council spend to local small and medium sized enterprises
%
Highland 43.6%

Family: 38.0%
Scotland: 28.7%
Target: Rank 8

Ranked **3** of **32**

ECON5
Number of Business Gateway start-ups
per 10,000 population
Highland 11.89

Family: 19.51
Scotland: 16.70
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **31** of **32**

ECON6
Council spend on Economic Development and Tourism?
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £63,866

Family: £108,516
Scotland: £102,086
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **18** of **32**

ECON7
People earning less than the living wage
%
Highland 20.8%

Family: 24.6%
Scotland: 19.4%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **12** of **32**

KPI ECON8
Properties receiving superfast broadband
%
Highland 75%

Family: 76%
Scotland: 92%
Target: 80%

Ranked **30** of **32**

ECON9
How many town centre commercial units are vacant
%
Highland 3.7%

Scotland: 10.0%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **2** of **32**

ECON10
Development land allocated for employment purposes is immediately available
%
Highland 2.7%

Family: 49.3%
Scotland: 37.4%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **26** of **32**

KPI

Businesses supported by Council and Business Gateway

2017/18: 1,191

2018/19: 1,802

Target: 1,400

Environmental Services

ENV1a - ENV7b

ENV1a ⭐

Council spend on refuse collection (net)
£ per premise
Highland £48.63

Family: £57.94
Scotland: £67.45
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **4** of **32**

ENV2a ⭐

Council spend on waste disposal (net)
£ per premise
Highland £85.40

Family: £111.24
Scotland: £97.29
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **9** of **32**

ENV3a ⭐

Council spend on street cleaning
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £3,728

Family: £10,173
Scotland: £14,880
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **1** of **32**

KPI ENV3c ⭐

Cleanliness of my local streets
%
Highland 5.6%

Family: 96.2%
Scotland: 92.8%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **7** of **32**

ENV4a ⭐

Council spend maintaining the condition of my roads
£ per kilometre
Highland £6,560

Family: £5,647
Scotland: £9,417
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **8** of **32**

ENV4b ⭐

Local A class roads in need of repair
%
Highland 29.3%

Family: 30.7%
Scotland: 30.0%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **22** of **32**

ENV4c 🟡
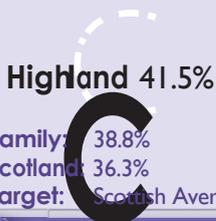
Local B class roads in need of repair
%
Highland 36.3%

Family: 37.6%
Scotland: 35.7%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **24** of **32**

ENV4d 🔻

Local C class roads in need of repair
%
Highland 41.5%

Family: 38.8%
Scotland: 36.3%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **25** of **32**

ENV4e 🔻

Local unclassified roads in need of repair
%
Highland 42.3%

Family: 43.6%
Scotland: 38.3%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **23** of **32**

ENV5a ⭐

Council spend on trading standards, money advice, and citizen advice
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £2,573

Family: £8,740
Scotland: £5,890
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **2** of **32**

ENV5b 🔻

Council spend on environmental health
£ per 1,000 people
Highland £17,564

Family: £21,106
Scotland: £14,994
Target: Scottish Average

£ — Ranked **24** of **32**

KPI ENV6 🟡

Household waste recycled
%
Highland 42.7%

Family: 30.6%
Scotland: 44.7%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **23** of **32**

ENV7a ⭐

Satisfaction with local refuse collection
%
Highland 86.8%

Family: 81.4%
Scotland: 76.3%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **4** of **32**

ENV7b ⭐

Satisfaction with local street cleanliness
%
Highland 69.9%

Family: 70.0%
Scotland: 66.3%
Target: Scottish Average

Ranked **13** of **32**

KPI

Street lighting energy consumption {kWh}
2017/18: 14,178,050
2018/19: 13,734,725
Target: 15,424,654

Road network to be considered for maintenance
2017/18: 38.8%
2018/19: 38.6%
Target: 38.9%

The Highland Council's annual Performance and Attitudes survey is used to better understand levels of satisfaction with Council services.

Every year we survey members of our Citizens' Panel. This group of residents is randomly selected and is designed to be representative of the adult population in Highland.

This year we received 1,137 responses from a possible 2,593 panel members providing a 44% response rate. A selection of the key results are provided.

Overall satisfaction with Council services

63% of the panel say they were satisfied overall with Council services in 2018/19, the same as in 2017/18.

Overall satisfaction with Council services

| **73%** 2015/16 | **73%** 2016/17 | **63%** 2017/18 | **63%** 2018/19 |

Council qualities

We asked questions on the qualities people feel are important about their Council.

We have used these to better understand what matters to people about how their Council behaves as well as what it achieves. Results in this section include:

- The most important quality that the panel want the Council to demonstrate is that it "Maintains good quality local services". Following this, the panel want the Council to provide value for money, and to listen to local people. These top three most important qualities are the same as in the previous two years.

- 51% of the panel believe the Council meets or exceeds their general expectations, (57% the previous year).

Quality as ranked in order of importance by respondents in 2018 survey	Respondents mentioning quality in their top 5 {%}		
	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %
1. Maintains good quality local services	75	78	76
2. Provides value for money	57	57	55
3. Listens to local people	54	57	55
4. Cares for the environment	47	51	39
5. Treats all residents fairly	35	38	38

The panel were asked whether they felt the Council met a number of qualities. More people agreed than disagreed that The Highland Council is:

- Approachable;
- Helpful;
- Maintains good quality local services;
- Cares for the environment;
- Treats all residents fairly.

The qualities that the survey respondents felt most strongly the Council was not meeting were:

- Involving people in how it spends money
- Represents your views; and
- Is efficient.

Community Life

The panel were asked their views on life in their communities. Key results included:

73% feel that the Council has strengthened the profile of the Gaelic language to a great or some extent (75% in 2017/18).

Community safety - 94% of respondents consider the area within 15 minutes' walk of their home to be 'very' or 'fairly' safe compared to 96% the year before.

Community safety - the top three areas of concern remain the same as in previous years. 80% are concerned about road safety, 69% about alcohol abuse, and 65% about drug misuse.

When asked about their awareness of the impact that hate incidents or crimes have on people in Highland, 82% said they were aware (78% in 2017/18) with 18% saying they were not aware (22% in 2017/18).

82% agree that Highland should do everything it can to get rid of all types of prejudice. This is a notable increase from 67% when the question was first asked in 2011.

Council Services

There are eight Council services that 85% or more of respondents say they use:

- Refuse/bin collection (98%)
- Road repairs & potholes (98%)
- Recycling facilities (97%)
- Winter roads maintenance (97%)
- Street cleaning (92%)
- Pavement maintenance (91%)
- Street lighting (91%)
- Grass cutting (87%)

The top three most important services for the public are: road repairs and potholes; winter road maintenance; and refuse/ bin collection. This table highlights the ten most important services to respondents:

Importance of services to respondents - appearance in respondents' top five					
Services	2015 %	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %
Road repairs and pot holes	63	66	55	70	71
Winter road maintenance	50	43	42	49	48
Refuse/bin collection	45	26	27	24	29
Primary education	21	23	24	25	27
Recycling facilities	28	18	15	14	25
Public parks and other open spaces	20	24	21	24	23
Secondary education	17	21	19	20	20
Public toilets	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	19
Pavement maintenance	15	14	10	15	18
Street cleaning	14	10	13	15	16

Survey respondents were also asked about their satisfaction with Council services. The highest levels of satisfaction were with libraries, and the lowest levels of satisfaction were with road repairs and potholes.

Net satisfaction {%}	
Service	2019 %
Libraries	82
Walking routes e.g. Great Glen Way	78
Residential homes for disabled/elderly people	73
Swimming pools	71
Recycling facilities	70

Net satisfaction {%}	
Service	2019 %
Services to reduce offending	-3
Pavement maintenance	-5
Planning for future land use (Local Plan)	-12
Public toilets	-31
Road repairs and potholes	-69

Net satisfaction is calculated by subtracting the percentage of people dissatisfied with a service from those that are satisfied with it.

Using our online services

We also ask questions to understand the panel's views on overall satisfaction with their online experience at the Council's website:
www.highland.gov.uk

Overall 67% said they were very or fairly satisfied with online services compared to 74% the year before.

In relation to questions on the quality of online services:

- 78% said they would use online services again (78% in 2018);
- 67% agreed that online services were easy to use (74% in 2018);
- 70% said they were able to find the online services they needed (76% in 2018);
- 57% agreed that online services were quick to complete (67% in 2018);
- 60% agreed that online services were easy to find (71% in 2018).

Perceptions of Young People

A new set of questions were asked in the survey which were developed with the Highland Youth Convener to help better understand perceptions of young people.

- 58% of the panel felt 'to some' or 'to a great extent' the Council supports and represents the views of young people.

The panel were also asked for their views on how young people positively contribute to their community:

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	Yes	No	Don't know
As consumers	65	7	28
As part of the workforce	59	12	29
As local service users	57	8	34
Through arts and culture	48	12	40
Through volunteering and charitable giving	47	12	41
As positive role models	40	14	46
By participating in decision making	25	26	50

Involving Communities

This is a developing set of questions around community engagement, participation and localism.
Results from this section include:

When asked to define their community, the most popular answers selected by the panel were: my village (42%); my street/ immediate neighbourhood (42%); Highland (40%); and my town (36%).

60% say they volunteer in the community by helping a neighbour, family or friend with 42% saying they volunteer through an organised group or club.

75% feel they have no or not very much influence over decision making in their communities.

The main reasons given for not having an influence were: 'Public bodies don't listen to community views' (41%); 'I don't think this would make a difference' (34%); and 'Not enough time' (28%).

58% say they would like to be very or fairly involved in decision-making in their area.

63% felt that their community could become more involved in providing the services that they and their community need.

The majority of the panel were aware of their local community council (74%), and 22% had been in contact with their community council over the past 12 months.

The panel were asked about the Council's approach to participatory budgeting. 35% of the panel were aware that we are developing this approach. If a participatory budgeting event was happening in their community, 66% said they would want to be involved by putting forward ideas for new projects, and 80% by choosing projects they liked the most.

72% of the people who responded also said they would be interested in community discussions about how local services are provided and making choices within budget limits.

Best Value Assurance Report

A national audit report has highlighted the Council's clear strategic vision and the increased pace of change to ensure long term financial sustainability, accountability and ambition.

The audit was carried out during 2019 and was published in January 2020 having examined the period since 2010. Councils have a statutory duty to deliver Best Value by demonstrating continuous improvement, the depth and pace of which is key to the Council's capacity to meet its priorities.

The report makes seven recommendations reinforcing the Council's existing plans for longer term financial planning, transformation and continuous improvement and seeks advises a more systematic approach to continuous improvement, self-assessment and performance management.

It also recognised the Council's recent increase in the pace of change towards improving the Council including It also recognises the establishment of more robust financial and governance controls to reverse the trend of overspend in some areas and the impact these had on council reserves.

The Accounts Commission's report and the Council's improvement plan can be found at:

www.bit.ly/Best-Value-Audit

How are we performing?

The Annual Performance Report for the period 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 showed good progress being made in delivering the Council's Programme, "Local Voices, Highland Choices".

77% of the commitments (23 out of the total 30) were either completed, on target or performance was being maintained. For 7 commitments (23%) there was mixed performance or no significant progress.

A Place to Live

The Council's first priority is to the people of the Highlands: the people who live and work here; those who grow up here; have settled here and grow old here.

In 2018/19 there were 525 new homes completed with 665 approvals to go to site. In 2017/18, 290 homes were completed, so over the two years this is an average of 407.5 new homes per year. Raining's Stairs in Inverness was officially opened in October 2018. This award winning development consists of 16 new affordable homes in the heart of Inverness.

Tenant satisfaction with the management of the neighbourhood they live in is 68%, compared to 69% in 2015-17. Tenant satisfaction with the opportunities to participate in decision-making processes is 56%, compared to 47% in 2015-17.

The Gaelic Team submitted 11 applications to the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund for 2019-2020. Funding totaling £118,650 was awarded. The Celtic Media Festival took place in June 2019.

A Place to Learn

Schools are at the centre of the lives of our citizens and local communities. Everyone should be given the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills, and experience, regardless of age or background.

Overall attainment is monitored through the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and key attainment indicators are nationally benchmarked. The Council's new Corporate Plan has now set challenging targets for improvement in education attainment indicators. The current position for the 2018/19 academic year (updated since the 2018/19 annual performance report) is:

59% of pupils achieved 5+ awards at SCQF Level 5 and we were ranked 24th nationally. This compares to Scottish average which is 63%. (2017/18: 61%; Ranked 19th)

12% of pupils from deprived areas achieved 5+ awards at SCQF Level 6 and we were ranked 22nd. This compares to the Scottish average which was 18%. (2017/18: 9%; Ranked 25th).

30% of pupils achieved 5+ awards at SCQF Level 6 and we were ranked 24th nationally. This compares to the Scottish average which was 35%. (2017/18: 32%; Ranked 18th).

Participation rates for 16-19 year olds was 92.2% and we were ranked 15th. This compares to the Scottish average which was 91.6%. (2017/18: 93.8%; Ranked 11th).

35% of pupils from deprived areas achieved 5+ awards at SCQF Level 5 and we were ranked 22nd nationally. This compares to the Scottish average which was 44%. (2017/18: 31%; Ranked 25th).

School attendance rates were 92.8% (2018-19) and we were ranked 21st nationally. This compares to the Scottish average of 93.0%. School attendance rates for Looked After Children for 2018-19 are awaiting verification and are yet to be published.

School exclusion rates were 22.7 per 1,000 pupils (2015-17) and we were ranked 17th nationally. This compares to the Scottish average of 26.8.

School exclusion rates for Looked After Children were 108.8 per 1,000 pupils (2015-17) and we were ranked 20th nationally. This compares to the Scottish average of 80.0.

Our Modern Apprenticeship Programme has exceeded our target to create 150 Modern Apprenticeships, with 191 apprentices supported. We are increasing our target to appoint 300 apprentices by March 2022.

The Council is on track to implement 1,140 hours of high quality early learning and childcare to every eligible child through a phasing approach across Highland. The Council implemented this in seven settings over 2018/19.

The percentage of children achieving their key developmental milestones by the time they enter school was 86% in 2018/19, compared to 84% in 2017/18.

During 2018/19, the Council spent £33.2m on school capital investment, improving condition, suitability and capacity. This included the completion of phase 1 of Inverness High School refurbishment, and works underway on a new Merkinch Primary School, a new Alness Academy, and Smithton Primary phase 2 works.

A Place to Thrive

We will do all we can to strengthen our infrastructure; support the growth of new and existing businesses; and the creation of new jobs.

The City-Region Deal will invest up to £315m into the regional economy. Projects include: The Centre for Health Innovation; Inverness Castle; The Northern Innovation Hub; Science Skills Academy; and Digital Programme, and many more.

The UHI Life Sciences Innovation Centre will be co-located with the new elective hospital and Life Science business incubator building on the Inverness Campus by 2021. £3.75m has been secured from the European Regional Development Fund to enhance the facility. This will improve the commercial activity of Life Sciences across the Highlands and the rehabilitation of patients from across the region.

The Northern Innovation Hub had faced significant delays in securing the business case approval, however all elements are approved including the capital element for a new food and drink centre. The team is in place and operating with businesses and individuals from across Highland.

The Inverness Community Links Plus project is underway. Governance arrangements have been set up and a number of the specific infrastructure interventions are being progressed. There is some slippage arising from engagement and design matters.

The Business Gateway Service continues to support businesses across the Highlands start-up, trade successfully and grow. This service achieved the following in 2018/19

- 280 start-up businesses were assisted;
- 1,802 business enquiries were successfully handled;
- 58 growth businesses were supported, with a number looking to employ people, take on new premises, and develop new markets.

Allied to this, via the Council's loan company (Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited), the Council invested £936,000 in 21 businesses, including 3 community businesses.

A Welcoming Place

We have an increasingly diverse population and we welcome people of all faiths, nationalities and backgrounds who wish to live, study, work or visit here. We also welcome people who wish to create businesses and those that can work in key sectors where we have skill shortages.

Highland welcomed 6.4 million visitors in 2017, with an economic impact of £1.25 billion. Data for 2018 indicates that there were over 6.5 million visitors to Highland, with an economic impact of £1.285 billion.

Nine applications were submitted to the first round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund with six being successful with £1.1 million of grant offered.

Support for the tourism sector and its supply chain businesses has been provided through the Business Gateway Service. This includes hosting further dedicated workshops on subjects such as maximising the opportunities brought by the North Coast 500. A number of tourism related start-ups were supported in 2018/19.

A Highland and Island's Talent Attraction Strategy is in place and partners are progressing the regional and local activity required. Work is progressing on the refresh and population of the Enterprising Highland portal website as a critical source of local information to aid (re)location decisions.

Road Safety

- Three new 20mph schemes have been developed and one scheme implemented in 2018/19.
- Children walking and cycling to school was 52% in the 2017/18 academic year, up from 51%.
- 13 Speed Indication Devices signs were installed via the 20mph programme in 2018/19. These were in Alness, Dingwall and Wick.

A Redesigned Council

The Council will be more open-minded to new ways of delivering services; more commercially-minded, raising income to sustain services and jobs across the region; and more community-minded by listening locally.

Two participatory budgeting events were held in 2018/19. The focus is now to plan how participatory approaches are applied to mainstream service activity.

In 2018/19, there were 69 expressions of interest for community asset transfers, and 15 full community asset transfers were requested, of these:

- 8 have been agreed
- 3 are under consideration
- 4 were withdrawn
- None were rejected

The Redesign Board oversaw peer reviews on Trade Services, Children's Commissioned Services and Agency and Temporary Workers. Recommendations are being implemented. Two new reviews have been commenced – on Catering Services and on Engineering Services. Lean reviews have continued with work on cash collection and trades services, and further proposals to be considered.

The Council's approach to localism continues to develop. During 2018/19 this included:

- Responding to the national Local Governance review on potential areas of local decision making
- A seminar to consider strategic, local and community governance in Highland
- Establishing a review of Council Governance
- Reviewing the Community Council Scheme, focusing on understanding how to improve relationships and communications, and improve involvement in local decision making.

Commercial proposals continue to be developed. Opportunities in the energy, tourism and land and property sectors are being progressed.

The Council agreed a 3 year revenue budget in February 2019. Whilst this still shows a funding gap in years 2 and 3 this is a major step forward in terms of restoring medium term financial planning.

Council Programme revision

The Council's Programme, "Local Voices, Highland Choices", was revised in 2018/19. The Corporate Plan which sets out how the Council's Programme will be delivered and addresses external audit feedback, with an increased focus on performance measurement and the Council's 27 Key Performance Indicators. This will help demonstrate the achievement of the Council's vision to be Ambitious for a Sustainable and Connected Highland.