

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Tuesday 25 August 2015 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs I Campbell (Substitute)  
Mr D Fallows  
Mr G Farlow  
Mr C Fraser  
Mr H Fraser

Mr K MacLeod  
Mr F Parr  
Mr T Prag (Substitute)  
Mrs M E Paterson  
Dr A Sinclair

### Also present:

Mr D Millar.

### In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning  
Mr K A Murray, Gaelic Development Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mrs M A Macleod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Ms D Grant, Gaelic Community Learning & Development Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Mrs M Mulholland, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Ms S Paterson, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Miss J Maclellan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service  
Miss J Green, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

### Also in attendance:

Mr A Cormack, Chief Executive, Fèisean nan Gàidheal

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Group.**

### Mr H Fraser in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Gordon, Mr J McGillivray and Ms K Stephen.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 6 – Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

### 3. Recess Powers

The Group **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2015 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Gaelic Implementation Group.

### 4. Good News

A list of Good News items was tabled at the meeting and, after the Chair had drawn specific attention to various issues, the Group **NOTED** the Good News.

### 5. The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 – Review and Renewal

There had been circulated Report No GIG/7/15 dated 16 July 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing information on factors that could influence the preparation of, and consultation on, the Council's third generation Gaelic Language Plan (GLP3) from 2016 onwards. Members were asked to agree to formally propose extending the current GLP 2012-16 to 2017 in order to align the next Plan with ongoing legislative developments and other forthcoming national initiatives as outlined in the report.

In amplification of the report, the Gaelic Development Manager was now able to confirm to Members that Bòrd na Gàidhlig had responded to the Council indicating that they were prepared to discuss the high level aims it would be seeking in GLP3, prior to Ministerial consideration.

In discussion, Members sought, and received, an assurance that there still would be sufficient time for GLP3 to receive Scottish Government and Bòrd na Gàidhlig approval before September 2017. It was hoped too that it would be ready in good time for a launch before the new Council was established in May 2017.

The Group **AGREED**:-

- i. that the Council approach Bòrd na Gàidhlig to formally seek a one year extension to Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 to 2017 in order to ensure that GLP3 was properly prepared and aligned with forthcoming legislation and the National Gaelic Language Plan 2017; and
- ii. that Bòrd na Gàidhlig was asked to formally agree a draft of the expectations of high-level aims relating to GLP 3 with the Council, prior to their submission to the Minister for agreement in principle.

### 6. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, Theme 1 "What we will do for Gaelic in the Home and in Communities" - Implementation Report

#### Declaration of Interest

**Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being Chair of the Chair of the North West Highlands Geopark but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No GIG/8/15 dated 21 July 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning providing further information on the implementation of Gaelic

Language Plan 2012-16 Theme 1 “What we will do for Gaelic in the Home and in Communities”. This updated the Council’s 2014-15 Annual Implementation Report and outlined further action since 31 January 2015.

In discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- it was pleasing to see that the number of participants in events and courses was continuing to increase;
- the difficulties encountered in recruiting Gaelic Medium Secondary school teachers was acknowledged, it being recognised that this was a problem nationally and the possibility of recruiting teachers from abroad, such as Nova Scotia, was mooted;
- the first few years of a child’s life was very important in terms of development and the benefits of teaching Gaelic at a young age was well documented, leading to an increased ability to learn other languages;
- it was pleasing to see a Gaelic community based conversational class had commenced at Farr High School and it was hoped this would encourage Gaelic elsewhere on the north coast;
- it was useful to dig down to establish what motivated individuals to learn Gaelic as this could then be used to encourage others. A draft strategy for adult learners was being prepared with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and, when publically available, a copy would be sent to Councillor Prag; and
- reference was made to a Scourie community group leaflet which had helped translate the local landscape from Gaelic into English and this had been augmented locally. Furthermore, reference was made to old Ordinance Survey maps where Gaelic had been used to identify geographic points. This generated an interest in Gaelic and the environment.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in implementing the Home and Communities Theme in GLP 12-16;
- ii. **AGREED** to welcome Officers’ collaboration with Newbattle Abbey College on a National Adult Achievement Award Scheme;
- iii. **AGREED** to welcome the development of a new resource, the Adult Literacy Course for Fluent Gaelic Speakers, in conjunction with Sabhal Mòr Ostaig;
- iv. **AGREED** to work with Bòrd na Gàidhlig and other partners to finalise a National Gaelic Adult Learning Strategy; and
- v. **AGREED** continued cross-agency working, including through the Community Planning Partnership, to encourage and facilitate Gaelic learning and usage opportunities in workplaces, homes, schools and communities.

## 7. Fèisean nan Gàidheal

Mr Arthur Cormack, Chief Executive of Fèisean nan Gàidheal (FnG), undertook a detailed presentation outlining FnG’s work alongside the Council.

FnG’s ambitions, priorities and achievements to date were explained, as was its funding streams and how it contributed towards sustaining the Gaelic language and culture. Reference too was made to Fèisgoil, a pilot project which had taken place in 15 schools in Lochaber, Sutherland and Caithness where classes had been provided to 772 pupils with the view to providing a Gaelic arts and language service both in education and the community. Continuing, Members attention was also drawn to the Blas Festival which

was scheduled to take place between 4-11 September. The Festival was now entering its 11<sup>th</sup> year and highlights and events from the proposed programme were provided.

During discussion, Members welcomed the points highlighted in the presentation and congratulated FnG on its achievements. In addition, the following comments were made:-

- the impact of the Council's letting policy on FnG was questioned. In response, Mr Cormack confirmed that FnG had previously received free lets but now that charges were being imposed it would have an impact, both this year and in the future. Meetings had taken place with Council officials to discuss this and, while it was recognised a consistent approach needed to be adopted, it was hoped that there was room for some discretion taking into account the educational benefits that participation in Fèis brought;
- the sense of achievements that young people had who had taken part in the Fèis movement was recognised;
- Blas had been established, in part, to boost the Highland economy at the end of the tourist season and it had certainly achieved that; and
- the success of Fèis Rois had been seen not only in Ross Shire but across Scotland.

Mr Cormack thanked Highland Council for its continued support which gave FnG leverage to generate funding from elsewhere.

Thereafter, the Group **NOTED** the Presentation.

## 8. Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund 2015

There had been circulated Report No GIG/9/15 dated 15 July 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing an overview of the successful applications submitted by the Council's Gaelic Team to the Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) for 2015-16.

Disappointment was expressed that the proposed Bilingual Gaelic and English "Fàilte don Ghàidhealtachd – Welcome to the Highlands" road sign project had not received any GLAIF funding. It offered the perfect opportunity to welcome visitors to the Highlands who were travelling on the A9 north and the possibility of Highland Council funding it itself were being investigated.

The Gaelic Team being congratulated on their hard work in achieving funding for the remaining projects, the Group otherwise:-

- i. **NOTED** the three successful GLAIF projects for 2015-16 as part of the Council's ongoing Gaelic Language Plan commitments;
- ii. **AGREED** that Council Officials engage with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to progress all the successful projects in GLAIF 15-16; and
- iii. **AGREED** to submit a final Report on GLAIF project implementation in 2016.

## 9. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, Theme 2 "What we will do for Gaelic in Education" - Implementation Report

There had been circulated Report No GIG/10/15 dated 20 July 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning providing an update on the implementation of Gaelic Language

Plan (GLP) 2012-16 Theme 2 “What we will do for Gaelic in Education” and information on a wide range of national and local level initiatives.

In discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members were pleased to see that the Council was supporting a Scoping Study of Gaelic Pre School provision in Dingwall. Croileagan Inbhir Pheofharain’s success had meant it had outgrown its current premises and it was necessary to look ahead. There was an opportunity too to consider the possibility of a Gaelic stand-alone school in Dingwall;
- it was good that 6 Gaelic Primary School probationer teachers had been enrolled and it was hoped, after the probationary year finished, that they would be retained. It was important too that the Council encouraged other teachers to transfer into Gaelic Medium Education;
- whilst the accommodation pressures at Bun Sgoil Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis was disappointing, the success of the school in attracting pupils was encouraging. It was suggested that, when planning other Gaelic Medium schools additional capacity be included taking into account the rise in the popularity of Gaelic;
- the significant increase in Gaelic Learner numbers in Millburn Academy was welcomed;
- it was important to have the official opening of Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Loch Abar as soon as possible to build on the positive momentum locally;
- the work taking place to provide Gaelic provision around Tongue Primary School was welcomed but it was recognised that any such provision needed to be sustainable in the long term to avoid the problem from reoccurring. The Council recognised that Services needed to be delivered differently in North West Sutherland and it was hoped that this applied to the delivery of Gaelic too;
- the contribution of Strathclyde University towards the Gaelic Immersion for Teachers pilot course was welcomed;
- it was hoped that the Gaelic Education officer post, which had been jointly funded by Highland and Argyll and Bute Councils, would be filled as soon as possible given the help and support this post provided to teachers; and
- Members welcomed the verbal report regarding the revival of Gaelic in the Perth and Kinross area.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress in implementing the Education Theme in the GLP;
- ii. **AGREED** to a formal high level Council event to mark the opening of Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Loch Abar, including the Scottish Government;
- iii. **AGREED** to replace the Gaelic Education Officer as soon as possible;
- iv. **AGREED** the action being taken to seek to resolve the difficulties around GM provision in the Bettyhill/Tongue area;
- v. **AGREED** to continue to press for Local Authority participation in the Gaelic Probationer Allocation Process; and
- vi. **AGREED** to the updating and publication of all the Gaelic Education statistical data; and the Online Gaelic Education Map.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.