

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 18 February 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr D Fallows
Mr G Farlow
Mr C Fraser

Mr H Fraser
Mr K MacLeod
Mr F Parr

Also present:

Mr A Millar

In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning
Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office
Mr K A Murray, Gaelic Development Manager, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M A Macleod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs M Mulholland, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms D Grant, Gaelic Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Paterson, Community Learning and Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Mrs V Gale, Chief Executive, Care and Learning Alliance
Ms N Ruettiman, Training and Development Manager, Care and Learning Alliance
Ms L Stuart, Childhood Practice Manager, Care and Learning Alliance

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 received from Mr J Gordon, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs M E Paterson, Dr A Sinclair and Ms K Stephen.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Items 5 and 7 - Mr G Farlow (non financial)

3. Good News

Items of Good News were circulated covering the following:-

- Adult Achievement Awards (Gaelic)
- Gaelic In-Service Day
- Gaelic Immersion for Teachers
- The Education Bill (Gaelic)
- Bord na Gaidhlig
- Gaelic Broadcasting and Media Conference
- Gaelic Fun Day and Information Day
- Bannan (Gaelic TV Drama) MGALBA
- New Am Baile Website

Having highlighted specific items, the Chairman also reminded Members that the choir from Bunsgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis had been invited to perform at the end of the Committee meeting.

During discussion, it was suggested that the Council's rare book collection held by High Life Highland Library Service could be made available to Am Baile as some of the material might be of interest to individuals wishing to join the Gaelic Society of Inverness.

The Group **NOTED** the Good News.

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

There had been circulated Report No GIG/1/16 dated 9 February 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning providing an update on the implementation of Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 Theme 2 "What we will do for Gaelic in Education" and information on a wide range of national and local level initiatives.

Members made reference to the Gaelic Immersion for Teachers (GIFT) scheme which enabled teachers in English Medium to take time away from their duties for a full academic year to improve their Gaelic skills and return to teach in Gaelic Medium. Members welcomed the ability that this provided to the Council to increase the number of Gaelic teachers and to promote development of skills in second languages as it was recognised that this had wider benefits to children's educational attainment. This would also enhance the Gaelic language teaching in primary and secondary schools.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in implementing the Education Theme in the Gaelic Language Plan;
- ii. **AGREED** the action being taken to seek to resolve the difficulties around Gaelic Medium provision in the Bettyhill/Tongue area;
- iii. **AGREED** to continue to press for Local Authority participation in the Gaelic Probationer Allocation Process; and
- iv. **AGREED** to the updating and publication of all the Gaelic Education statistical data and the Online Gaelic Education Map.

5. Partnership Working between the Council and the Care and Learning Alliance In Gaelic Early Learning and Childcare Sector

Declaration of Interest

Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being a member of An Talla Solais 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.

Mrs Valerie Gale, Chief Executive of the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) gave a presentation explaining that the partnership with the Council and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to provide tailored support to designated Gaelic toddler Groups had commenced in January 2012. Four part-time Development Workers had been recruited to provide visit support, building on the previous work done by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Council in developing Gaelic medium toddler provision. The aim had been to create a professionally organised, well-resourced and sustainable Gaelic 0-3 sector and, in the four years, there had been a number of positive results including increased use of Gaelic in toddler groups, smoother transitions to Gaelic pre-school provision and increased awareness of the benefits of bilingualism. Parental feedback had been positive and, with funding having been agreed in June 2015, CALA were now able to continue with a similar project which, amongst other things, would develop closer collaborative working between Bòrd na Gàidhlig and CALA teams.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the positive impact and the good working relationships that had been developed were welcomed;
- correspondence levels with parents was high, reflecting the value parents placed on the services being provided;
- 80% of parents had indicated an awareness of the benefits of bilingualism. This was a positive trend that was the result of the background work on this in recent years;
- CALA were congratulated on the processes that had allowed Gaelic Medium Education (GME) to be taken more seriously and become part of the fabric of Scotland. Information having been sought on the future of the project, it was confirmed that a budget had been agreed for the first year of a further 3-year plan. It was hoped that finance would be secured for future years after the forthcoming Budget;
- reference was made to a presentation given to the Group several years previously by Professor Antonella Sorace of Edinburgh University on the benefits of bilingualism for children's brain development;
- attention was drawn to the benefits of targeting parents pre-birth. This included such initiatives as voluntary Gaelic nursery groups running a buddy-system for new parents. If contact with parents had not been made for a first child, this also provided an opportunity to establish contact with the older child; and
- a request was made for details of the Little Art project, a community arts collaboration between Brogan Beaga and An Talla Solais, to be provided to Members of the Group.

The Director welcomed continued partnership working with CALA and commended the critical work they were undertaking in the Early Years sector. He referred to Scottish Government plans to double the Early Learning and childcare entitlement to 1140 hours per year by 2020 and that Gaelic-medium childcare would play an important role in that.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that details of the Little Art project, a community arts collaboration between Brogan Beaga and An Talla Solais, be provided to Members.

6. Formal Extension Date of the Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16

There had been circulated Report No GIG/2/16 dated 5 February 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning providing confirmation of Bòrd na Gàidhlig's formal approval of a one year extension to the Highland Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 to 18 September 2017.

Members welcomed the response to the request, looked forward to the exciting times ahead for Gaelic and thanked the team for their work.

The Group **NOTED** the response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig formally approving a year's extension to the Council GLP 2012-16.

7. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 – Draft Annual Implementation Report 2015-16

Declarations of Interest

Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being a Director of North West Highland Geopark Ltd 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/3/16 dated 5 February 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning providing a draft, for approval, of the 2015-16 Annual Implementation Report in relation to the Council's Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report and made the following comments:-

- positive feedback in relation to Fèisean nan Gàidheal's use of resources would be passed to the Gaelic Development Manager;
- the bi-lingual Gaelic-English pamphlet for the UNESCO North West Highland Geopark was welcomed and it was hoped other geoparks in bi-lingual regions around the world would consider doing the same. It was also hoped that a GME Unit would eventually be sited in the geopark; and
- Mr Millar sought information on the number of pupils in Highland experiencing Gaelic outwith GME Units.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the Draft Annual Implementation Report covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 January 2016; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Annual Implementation Report.

8. Gaelic in the Workplace – Service Centre

There had been circulated Report No GIG/4/16 dated 5 February 2016 by the Head of Policy and Reform informing Members of the work to date and the forward planning for

the inclusion of Gaelic within the activities and remit of the Service Centre, as the Centre received 300,000 calls annually.

The Group **NOTED** this new development as an implementation target within the Gaelic Language Plan.

The meeting ended at 11.40am, after which the choir from Bunsgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis sang several songs for the Group.