

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 11 August 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Fraser
Mr H Fraser
Mr S Fuller
Mr J McGillivray
Mr K MacLeod

Mr F Parr
Mrs M E Paterson
Dr A Sinclair
Ms K Stephen

In attendance:

Mrs N Young, Area Care & Learning Manager – West, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Steven, Head of Education, 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
Mr C Morrison, Gaelic Education Officer, Care and Learning Service
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:-

Professor C Ó Giollagáin, Director of Soillse

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 G Farlow and Mr J Gordon.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Recess Powers

The Group **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2016 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Gaelic Implementation Group.

4. Good News

There had been tabled a list of Good News items involving and promoting the Gaelic language and culture.

In congratulating all those involved, tribute was also paid to the hard work and dedication of those who supported and assisted these projects but who often were overlooked. It was important that these successes were promoted and brought to the attention of a wider audience.

Thereafter, the Group **NOTED** the Good News.

5. Presentation – Soillse

Professor Conchúr Ó Giollagáin, Gaelic Research Professor and Director of Soillse, undertook a presentation on empowering the involvement of community based initiatives to support the evolution of Gaelic. Soillse was a research collaboration between the University of the Highlands and Islands/Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, Aberdeen University, Edinburgh University and the University of Glasgow and had been established to provide an enhanced research capacity to inform public policy towards the maintenance and revitalisation of Gaelic language and culture.

During his presentation Professor Giollagáin acknowledged that it was important to recognise the achievements made to date but there were challenges ahead that needed to be faced if Gaelic was to be supported and promoted in the home and in the community. The benefits generated by the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 were to be welcomed but this legislation also had had its limitations, examples being its focus on provision at the expense of social engagement and the erosion of the existing Gaelic community network due to the emphasis on learner-focused models. He outlined a number of positive strategic initiatives to address this, pointing out that it would be difficult for learner networks to develop unless there were strong communities of Gaelic speakers. He acknowledged the role of official bodies in facilitating learning and engagement but, at present, the approach was organisation-led rather than community-led and a form of Assembly would go some way to preserve the Gaelic community.

In conclusion, he suggested that Gaelic had become too compartmentalised. Gaelic was in danger of disappearing as a social and communal identity and he feared that the point would soon be reached where there would only be Gaelic speaking learners rather than speakers from community and/or family networks. This, he argued, would devoid Gaelic from any credibility as a minority language and, in turn, would make the teaching and learning of Gaelic as a second language more difficult without reference to a community of fluent speakers.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Gaelic in Scotland was well supported but more needed to be done to ensure Gaelic did not disappear;
- bilingualism in young people empowered them;
- the projections suggested in the presentation for Gaelic gave concern and it was important to challenge what was being done at present. For example, it was suggested that best use of resources might not be the translation of long official

documents, many of which were unread, but to concentrate on supporting social aspects where people could use the language;

- Gaelic could often be picked up through social aspects and people's own personal interests e.g. music;
- generations of Gaelic speakers had already been lost and it was vital that Gaelic was valued; and
- the importance of sustaining and empowering communities to deal with these challenges was paramount.

Appreciation having been expressed to Professor Ó Giollagáin, the Group otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. A Fairer Deal for BBC ALBA - BBC Royal Charter Review Scottish Gaelic Broadcasting

There had been circulated Report No GIG/11/16 dated 27 July 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning regarding the response Highland Council submitted to the UK Government Public Consultation on the BBC Royal Charter Review, specifically the section relating to Scottish Gaelic Broadcasting.

In discussion, comment was made that the level of resource provided to BBC Alba was not commensurate to the level of television licence fees collected in Scotland and, in particular, Highland. Furthermore, there was disappointment that the response from the Chairperson of the BBC Trust was that it had no involvement in the consideration of any changes to funding levels of BBC services and calls were made for lobbying to continue to ensure the BBC made more of a commitment to Gaelic Broadcasting. This had been the subject of a petition on social media and had attracted considerable online support.

The Group:-

- i. **AGREED** to homologate the response, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** the responses received from the Chairperson of the BBC Trust and from Lord Hall, Director General of the BBC trust, as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 respectively of the report.

7. Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund 2016/17 – Project Applications Approved by Bòrd na Gàidhlig

There had been circulated Report No GIG/12/16 dated 26 July 2016 by Director of Care and Learning providing a summary of the eight Gaelic Language Act Implementation Fund (GLAIF) Projects which were submitted by the Gaelic Team to Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) for the 2016/17 funding period. GLAIF, for financial year 2016/17, closed on 18 April and all applicants were informed by BnaG of the decision on their applications on 4 July 2016. Seven of Highland Council's applications had been successful.

Having thanked officers for their hard work in recent months in preparing the applications for consideration, the Group otherwise **AGREED**:-

- i. that Officers engage with BnaG to implement the projects as supported through GLAIF 2016/17 funding; and
- ii. a final report on GLAIF 2016/17 project implementation be submitted to a future Gaelic Implementation Group meeting.

8. Gaelic in Community Sports Activities in Partnership with Comunn na Gàidhlig, Iomain Cholomchille and High Life Highland Health and Well-being

There had been circulated Report No GIG/13/16 dated 14 July 2016 by Director of Care and Learning informing Members of two national sports activities which specifically focused on language usage and acquisition along with the skills used to undertake the sports facilities.

In discussion, Members acknowledged the activity which was taking place and expressed their appreciation to the considerable number of people involved in promoting and delivering these activities. In particular, the success of the 2016 Cuach na Cloinne competition was welcomed which, in the Highland Council area, had attracted 21 teams from 12 schools. The national finals had been held in Fort William and it had been encouraging to see young people speaking Gaelic both on and off the pitch. It was hoped this degree of success could also be developed through the sport of shinty.

The Group **NOTED** two national Gaelic language sporting events which took place in the Highlands, namely:-

- the ongoing Cuach na Cloinne competition; and
- the progress made in relation to developing and supporting the Cupa Iomain na h-Òige.

9. Gaelic Language Plan 2 2012-16, Theme 1 “What we will do for Gaelic in the Home and in Communities” - Implementation Report

There had been circulated Report No GIG/14/16 dated 27 July 2016 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 1 August 2015-June 2016.

Following a summary of the report, the work of the Gaelic team in developing Gaelic in education was acknowledged and this would be developed further with the appointment of the new Gaelic Education Officer. In addition there were a range of Adult Gaelic Classes taking place and particular mention was made of the community based classes in Dingwall, many participants of which were parents of Gaelic Medium children. In this regard, the background support given to Gaelic learners in the development of classes was highlighted, without which many of these classes would not take place.

Comment was also made that a Gaelic judo group had been represented at Gaelic Medium Awareness Information Day held in Tain, in February 2016, and Mr K MacLeod offered any assistance or advice he could provide.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** progress in implementing the Home and Communities Theme in the Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16; and

- ii. **AGREED** continued cross-agency working, including through the Community Planning Partnership, to encourage and facilitate Gaelic learning and usage opportunities in workplaces, homes, school and communities.

The meeting ended at 11.20 a.m.