

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Implementation Group** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 10 November 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell (substitute)
Mr G Farlow
Mr C Fraser
Mr H Fraser
Mr S Fuller

Mr J McGillivray
Mr K MacLeod
Mrs M E Paterson
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
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:-

Mr D MacKenzie, Skills Development Scotland
Mr D W Morrison, Stòrlann

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 F Parr and Dr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

Items 6 and 7 - Mr G Farlow (non financial)

3. 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 in the recent Mod in the Western Isles, particular mention was made of the Dingwall Gaelic Choir and Primary School and Katie Smith, Kyle. Members hoped that young Gaelic singers could be invited to perform at a future meeting of the Group or the Council.

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

4. Presentation – Skills Development Scotland

Mr Derek MacKenzie, Gaelic Development Officer of Skills Development Scotland, undertook a presentation on the second iteration of SDS's Gaelic Language Plan, submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig in October 2016, and the activities in relation to the implementation of SDS Gaelic Language Plan.

During his presentation Mr MacKenzie provided examples of the high level aims of the Plan where there were key development areas with the Highland Council. Included in these were the provision of Gaelic resources for teachers, information regarding Gaelic work opportunities and career paths, information and support to businesses to train new entrants and employees to industry-recognised standards through the medium of Gaelic and partnership working with Local Authorities to develop further Gaelic medium training and a labour market information strategy recognising the value of Gaelic skills. In addition, Members were reminded that in 2013 SDS and Highland Council had devised the Siuthad Gaelic Careers events. Following on from its success in Inverness and Skye it was now also running successfully elsewhere in Scotland.

In discussion, the following points were made:-

- the successful working partnership between the Council and SDS was welcomed;
- both modern and foundation apprenticeships were being promoted and further detail on them was provided. An example of a Gaelic-medium apprenticeship was within a Gaelic-medium nursery unit;
- information was sought on wider engagement possibilities, for example with the crofting and grazing communities, and with the Western Isles Council and UHI;
- with only 6 SDS staff being fluent and confident to use Gaelic in the working environment, Director-level support was being sought to have Gaelic as an 'essential' skill for certain posts;
- it was important to show school pupils the wide range of Gaelic-related careers that were available; and
- the benefits of bi-lingualism were referred to and it was clarified that Gaelic-medium modern apprenticeships were not just restricted to young people who had been through Gaelic Medium Education.

Appreciation having been expressed to Mr MacKenzie, the Group **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Presentation - Stòrlann

Mr Donald William Morrison, Chief Executive of Stòrlann, a limited company which co-ordinated the production and distribution of curriculum resources for Gaelic education, undertook a presentation outlining the work of Stòrlann and highlighting a number of the resources available.

During a detailed presentation Mr Morrison set out the background and history of Stòrlann. With a staffing complement of 15 employees, Stòrlann provided a variety of services including project and resource development, translation, course writing and web design. Their areas of work covered groups ranging from pre-school, primary and secondary schools to parents, carers, Local Authorities and national agencies. Stòrlann had developed a range of resources for use in Gaelic Medium Education and Learning and for parents who did not speak Gaelic and needed support to help their children with homework. In this regard, the benefits of using social media had been recognised and he highlighted the on-line service Stòrlann ran, operated by 2 ex teachers, for parents. However, technology brought challenges with some remote areas struggling with bandwidth and broadband speeds and with many Gaelic words being blocked by firewall and Service Providers.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the work of Stòrlann was welcomed, as was the vast number of books and other Gaelic materials that had been downloaded to date;
- it was important that Emerging Literacy developments were taken into account in Gaelic Medium Education i.e. ensuring children were provided with learning material that was appropriate to their developmental stages. It was confirmed that close work was undertaken with education practitioners on this and information was provided on Gaelic phonic teaching and tie in with reading material, as well as other initiatives such as Book Bug;
- the importance of pre-school language absorption was emphasised, with an example of CDs being provided to Gaelic Medium nursery children to extend their exposure to the language;
- the Chair sought, and received, information about attendance at the An t-alltan annual Early Years Conference in September 2016 and progress with e-sgoil, the Gaelic virtual school for Scotland. It was important that Gaelic was taken into consideration when the chrome book was rolled out; and
- an improvement for the future would be to deliver a broader selection of courses at secondary school level and into workplaces.

Appreciation having been expressed to Mr Morrison, the Group otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16, Theme 5 – “What we will do for Gaelic in Economic Development” and Theme 4 “Gaelic in the Workplace” - Implementation Report

Declaration of Interest: Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of a close family member taking part in a debating competition in the Western Isles 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/16/16 dated 31 October 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning providing an update on the implementation of Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16 Theme 5 “What we will do for Gaelic in Economic Development” and Theme 4 “Gaelic in the Workplace”.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- on behalf of the Group the Chairman thanked the Gaelic Team for the work undertaken on these two Themes. The Council would soon be looking towards its third Gaelic Language Plan and it was important that it built on the significant progress achieved to date;
- it was suggested that the Gaelic Team was under resourced preventing more reports from being considered by the Group;
- the Gaelic Implementation Group (GIG) had responsibility for one of the major cornerstones of the Council's Programme and it was important this was recognised during the Council's Redesign. In this regard, moving forward, it was suggested that Members should consider a strategic direction for Gaelic;
- the benefits of Gaelic needed to be highlighted, especially in relation to bilingualism. Members were reminded of a presentation made previously to GIG by Professor Antonella Sorace of Edinburgh University where the opportunities of bilingualism had been emphasised;
- it was questioned why there did not appear to be any Gaelic Implications associated with the reports. Similarly, it could be argued that there were Rural Implications if the Council was to achieve the introduction of Gaelic to workplaces in Sutherland;
- the lack of peer engagement being cited as a reason to close small schools in Sutherland was questioned. There did appear to be a dichotomy between the objectives of the Education Service and Gaelic and this was something which GIG should address. In this regard, the lack of Gaelic education in Sutherland was highlighted; and
- information was requested about how the money, ring-fenced by the Scottish Government for Gaelic, was being used. It was essential this money was maximised and that it was used to develop Gaelic organisations such as Stòrlann in meeting its objectives. This might necessitate Cabinet Minister attendance at a future meeting of GIG.

The Group:-

- NOTED** the implementation of the Gaelic Language Plan Economic Development and Workplace Themes;
- AGREED** to encourage the marketing of Gaelic Careers and Job Opportunities with SDS and Bòrd na Gàidhlig; and
- AGREED** that a strategy meeting be held early in 2017 to consider how Gaelic could be protected as the Council moved forward.

7. The Royal National Mòd 2016 and Future Mòds in the Highland Area

Declaration of Interest: Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of a close family member being part of the North West Gaelic Choir 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/17/16 dated 31 October 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning informing Members of the developments in relation to (a) the Royal National Mòd which took place in the Western Isles from 14-22 October 2016 (inclusive); (b) the Lochaber 2017 Mòd; and (c) Inverness 2020 Mòd.

Introducing the report, the Chairman congratulated the organisers of the Royal National Mòd in the Western Isles and, looking forward, he encouraged Members to support the 2017 Lochaber Mòd to ensure its success as well. The significant economic benefits Mòds brought were well recognised and they also provided an opportunity for areas to be marketed positively on a world-wide scale.

Reflecting on successes of small local choirs at the recent Mòd, it was questioned if there were any “light” Mòds which could be used as a stepping stone to encourage new and small choirs to participate. In this connection, other Members suggested that the local provincial Mòds offered this opportunity, the Ullapool Mòd being cited as a specific example.

The Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the update regarding the Western Isles Mòd;
- ii. **APPROVED** the setting up of a Mòd Liaison Group in the lead up to the Lochaber Mòd and to provide support to the Inverness Local Organising Committee as and when required; and
- iii. **AGREED** to maintain close contact with An Comunn Gàidhealach both locally and nationally.

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.