

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education, Children and Adult Services Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 26 January 2017 at 10.05 am.

### Present:

#### Highland Council:

Mr A Baxter (Substitute)	Mr N MacDonald (Substitute) (video conferencing)
Mrs C Caddick	Mr D Mackay
Mrs I Campbell (Vice Chair)	Mr W Mackay (video conferencing)
Mr A Christie	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs B McAllister
Mr M Finlayson	Mr D Millar (Chair)
Mr H Fraser	Mrs M Paterson
Mr S Fuller	Mrs F Robertson (Vice Chair)
Mr B Gormley	Mr G Ross
Mr K Gowans	Ms J Slater
Mr A Graham	Ms K Stephen

#### Religious Representatives:

Mr A MacLean  
Ms M McCulloch  
Mr G Smith

#### Youth Convener:

Mr C MacLennan

#### Non-Members also present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr A Henderson (video conferencing)
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Kerr
Mrs G Coghill	Mr J McGillivray
Ms J Douglas	Ms L Munro
Mr A Duffy	Ms M Smith
Mr G Farlow	Mr J Stone
Mr R Greene	Mr B Thompson (video conferencing)

#### In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning  
Mrs B Cairns, Head of Additional Support Services, Care and Learning Service  
Ms S Campbell, Head of Children's Services, Care and Learning Service  
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service  
Mr J Steven, Head of Education, Care and Learning Service  
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Ms B Brown, Strategic Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mr S Stewart, Digital Learning Development Officer, Care and Learning Service

Mr P Finlayson, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Ms M Stewart, Project Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Ms R Bell, Policy Officer, Care and Learning Service  
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Finance Service  
Ms S Blyth, Highland Parent Council Partnership  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service  
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

**Also in attendance:**

Ms K Glen, Project Co-ordinator, Safe, Strong and Free  
Ms J Macdonald, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland

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

**Mr D Millar in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence**  
**Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs D Mackay, Ms M Newdick, Ms A Pascoe, Mr M Rattray and Dr H van Woerden.

**2. Declarations of Interest**  
**Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

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

Item 5 – Ms J Douglas (non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial and non-financial)  
Item 6 – Mr A Christie, Ms J Douglas (both non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial and non-financial)  
Item 11 – Mr K Gowans (non-financial) and Mr G Smith (financial)  
Item 12 – Ms J Douglas (non-financial)

Ms J Douglas declared a financial interest in those items relating to integrated health and social care services as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the Specific Exclusion in Section 5.18(2)(i) of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, remained to participate in discussion on those items.

Mr B Gormley declared a financial interest as his wife was employed by the Care and Learning Service and advised that, if there was any specific discussion in relation to the Family Team in Lochaber he would leave the room.

Mrs B McAllister declared a non-financial interest in any items that might raise discussion on the Highland Senior Citizens Network as she was a Board Member but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

### 3. **Presentation: Safe, Strong and Free** **Taisbeanadh: Sàbhailte, Làidir agus Saor**

Kerry Glen, Project Co-ordinator, gave a presentation on Safe Strong and Free, a Highland charity, part-funded by the Council, which aimed to reduce the vulnerability of young children to abuse and assault. The main approach of the organisation was workshops which taught children about serious issues in a fun way. Rather than frightening children, they focused on empowering them with tools to stay safe and the knowledge that their body belonged to them.

The workshops included basic, effective assertiveness and resistance strategies and a video was shown which described the three pre-school workshops on bullying, strangers and secrets in more detail. Safe Strong and Free believed that children's vulnerability would be reduced by raising awareness of families and communities, in conjunction with providing children with resources of their own that they could use when they found themselves in a difficult situation.

Having commended the workshops, which were age-appropriate and made it possible for adults to have difficult conversations with children, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

### 4. **Outstanding Achievements** **Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

There had been tabled a list of outstanding achievements by people and groups.

In relation to the success of the Highland Deaf Education Service, Members commented that Dingwall Academy was unique in offering British Sign Language as a modern language and queried whether there had been any progress towards a formal qualification, through the SQA, at senior school stage. The Director undertook to make enquiries in that regard.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outstanding achievements and **AGREED** that the Director write to all those involved in recognition of their success; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Director enquire as to whether there had been any progress towards a formal qualification in British Sign Language, through the SQA, at senior school stage.

In terms of Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that agenda item 11 be considered at this stage.

### 11. **Management of Schools Update** **Fios às Ùr mu Riaghladh Sgoiltean**

**Declarations of Interest:**

**Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland 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 his involvement in the discussion.**

**Mr G Smith declared a financial interest as a supply teacher and left the room.**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/07/17 dated 17 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided the background to the Management of Schools programme and an update on the progress to date; set out the new approaches and management structures in eight Associated Schools Groups (ASGs) that were proposed to be developed and taken forward for August 2017; and provided details of the further development of these approaches across all other ASGs over the next three years.

In introducing the report, the Head of Education explained that the proposals were part of an all-encompassing strategic project with six key workstreams which, together, represented a revised approach to the provision of education in Highland that would deliver better outcomes. A considerable amount of time had been spent on the consultation phase. However, two ASGs were particularly unhappy and he stressed that, if there was a perceived lack of communication and engagement, it was necessary to do better going forward. It was emphasised that the management of schools agenda was not about school closures but sustaining schools in communities through innovative management measures. Whilst there were savings allocated to the project, that applied to almost every area of service in the Council and he was confident that the savings could be delivered without impacting on the quality of education in schools. However, it would be challenging and it was necessary to work in partnership and engage with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, Education Scotland and Trade Unions.

The proposed 3-18 arrangements would create a sense of community from an early age and provide better curriculum progression and opportunities to close the attainment gap. The proposals would also reduce teacher workload and provide greater opportunities for Continuing Professional Development and the use of technology as well as a shared improvement agenda. Whilst there would be fewer Head Teachers there would be more management posts and the post of Principal Teacher in primary schools would allow for better career progression. Primary school Head Teachers were currently under significant pressure and the introduction of non-teaching Head Teachers would address that. In conclusion, he reiterated that the proposals would deliver better outcomes for staff and pupils and sustain communities throughout the Highlands.

The Chair referred to representations received in relation to two ASGs, as alluded to by the Head of Education, and sought the Committee's agreement to defer the decisions on Mallaig and Farr ASGs to the March Committee to allow consultation to take place.

Discussion then ensued, during which the following issues were raised:-

- it was suggested that Kinlochbervie ASG also be deferred to allow further consultation to take place as staff and the Parent Council were not on board with the proposals;
- in relation to the proposed deferral of Mallaig and Farr ASGs to the Committee on 1 March, Members questioned whether there was sufficient time for consultation

to take place. The Chair confirmed that officers would endeavour to carry out the necessary consultation within the timeframe;

- reference was made to an exchange of emails between the Chair of Daviot Parent Council and the Care and Learning Service which indicated that adequate consultation had not taken place. Meaningful consultation was required, particularly if the Council was serious about building communities. The communities of Daviot and Strathdearn had a real desire to be involved in the process and, for reasons of consistency, it was suggested that Millburn ASG also be deferred;
- the proposals represented a complex series of interlinked changes that could not be adequately reflected in a Committee report. Effective engagement had not taken place and it was understandable that some people did not fully grasp the depth of what was being sought;
- the role of a class-committed Head Teacher in a small primary school was unsustainable as they were distracted by management issues that had previously been dealt with by the local education office. The driver behind the proposals was not savings but improving the quality of learning and teaching by separating management responsibilities and freeing up teachers to teach effectively;
- the nature of learning and teaching had changed but the management structure and job titles had not, the term Head Teacher currently covering a range of individuals with very different responsibilities. The proposals addressed this and it was necessary to move forward with them;
- in relation to Dornoch ASG, staff, parents and the community were enthusiastic about the initiative and were driving it forward;
- the Head of Education's comments and acknowledgement that consultation had been lacking in some areas was welcomed;
- the report did not adequately address equalities and rural implications and information was sought on what rural proofing assessment had been undertaken in each of the ASGs and, particularly in relation to Mallaig and Farr, whether the findings would be published;
- Members queried whether teaching staff, particularly Head Teachers, and Parent Councils had been informed of the proposals before they were publicised by the press;
- information was requested on how officers believed the proposals empowered teachers and Parent Councils to make effective decisions for their school communities;
- clarification was sought as to the discrepancy between the Year 1 proposals in the report and the Head of Education's response to representations received, particularly from the community on the Isle of Eigg, in which he had indicated that the proposals were a starting point for discussions for a long term plan;
- devolved decision-making at a local level was not addressed in the report and more detail was sought in that regard;
- there had been a lack of community engagement and empowerment in some circumstances and it was hoped this would be addressed in future proposals;
- in relation to Farr ASG, whilst Local Members supported the principle of a 3-18 campus and believed it would provide sustainability, two schools were extremely unhappy about the proposals. In addition, parents were concerned that a number of the Head Teachers were Acting Heads who would be stepping down at the end of the school year. Officers had met with the various stakeholders numerous times and disappointment was expressed regarding the proposed deferral as it would not change people's concerns;

- whilst supporting the principle of sustainability, it was important to be flexible and look at different options where there were individual needs and challenges;
- whilst recognising the need to move quickly in some areas due to the number of Acting Head Teachers, Daviot and Strathdearn Primary Schools had recently appointed Head Teachers and it was suggested that their inclusion in the Year 1 proposals be revisited to allow more time to get stakeholders on board;
- a non-teaching Head Teacher was purely a management role and it was important to ensure that applicants had the necessary skill set and abilities;
- the proposals would present a geographical challenge for some Head Teachers and sharing what was working well elsewhere might be an effective way to get people on board;
- the demands on Head Teachers in terms of administration had increased significantly over the years. In addition, the recruitment crisis and lack of supply teachers meant that some Head Teachers had also to provide supply cover. As a result, as reported in staff surveys, teaching staff were stressed. The situation was precarious and the Council was obliged to respond and design a structure that would not only provide quality education for children but support teaching staff. However, it was important to engage with parents and help them to understand that the proposed structure was not of less value and that they could approach the Principal Teacher if there were any issues on site;
- it would have been interesting to see teachers' comments on the proposals reflected in the report, as well as the outcomes for pupils;
- reducing the number of Head Teacher posts might discourage people thinking of education as a career;
- Members queried whether business graduates with no teaching experience would be eligible for non-teaching Head Teacher posts;
- the intended outcomes had not been well communicated and it was necessary to have as many conversations as required to ensure communities understood what the Council was trying to achieve. One size did not fit all and it was necessary to focus on areas that were complex geographically; and
- given the concerns raised in relation to Kinlochbervie and Millburn ASGs, it was suggested that a compromise might be to move forward with the four ASGs where there was relative confidence that there were no issues and defer the remaining four to send a message that representations from Councillors on behalf of their constituents had been taken into account.

In relation to the Isle of Eigg, the Chair explained that he had corresponded with the Chair of the Parent Council who was content that consultation would be carried out with the island communities prior to the next meeting of the Committee. In addition, he explained that, in tandem with the proposals, an in-depth review of management/support within schools was being carried out by the Redesign Board and would be reported to the Council in March 2017. He went on to highlight that a number of the issues raised during discussion had been addressed at the various seminars that had taken place on the management of schools. However, Members emphasised the importance of debating the issues in a public forum.

The Leader of the Council emphasised that the proposals were about sustaining schools and communities, reducing bureaucracy and freeing up teachers to teach. Reference was made to Fort Augustus, where a cluster arrangement had been in place for a number of years and worked well. The model would evolve over time, property maintenance being another issue that required consideration, but it presented an opportunity to create new jobs throughout Highland and build confidence in

communities, which would both encourage families to stay and attract people to come and work there. In addition, it was necessary to look at workforce planning and take a “grow your own” approach. Whilst the proposals were exciting, they were complex and she acknowledged the need to make sure people were on board. In an organisation as large and complex as the Council there would be occasional failures and the lack of consultation in some areas, particularly the island communities, had been admitted and would be rectified. She agreed that rural proofing needed to be articulated more and undertook to liaise with colleagues and officers in that regard. The level of support and aspiration from some parents was commendable and, in relation to decision-making at local level, it was necessary to think about how the parents in the various clusters could start to relate to each other and collaborate to evolve how their schools and clusters would work. In relation to Farr, it was necessary to understand the issues and she offered to liaise with Local Members to find a solution that would please both the communities and the Care and Learning Service.

Thereafter, the Chair, seconded by Mrs I Campbell, **MOVED** the recommendations as set out in the report, subject to subject to Mallaig and Farr ASG being deferred to the Committee on 1 March 2017 to allow consultation to take place.

Following a brief adjournment to allow Members to consider the terms of their amendment, the Chair confirmed that discussions had taken place with the communities in Kinlochbervie ASG and that Local Members would be invited to attend any further meetings.

Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr G MacKenzie, then moved, as an **AMENDMENT**, that the decision on Millburn ASG also be deferred to allow the communities served by Daviot and Strathdearn Primary Schools to be consulted.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 15 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 9 votes, with 1 abstention. The **MOTION** was therefore carried, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr H Fraser, Mr A Graham, Mr N MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mr A MacLean, Mrs M McCulloch, Mr D Millar, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr G Ross and Ms K Stephen.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie, Mrs C Caddick, Ms J Slater, Mr B Gormley, Mr S Fuller, Mrs B McAllister, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr K Gowans.

**Abstentions:**

Mr C Maclennan

**Decision**

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the strategic direction set out in the report;
- ii. the proposals for the ASGs set out in the report, subject to Mallaig and Farr being deferred to the Committee on 1 March 2017 to allow consultation to take place; and

- iii. in principle, to the post of Principal Teacher Primary – Management, subject to the conclusion of discussions with the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

## **5. Revenue Budget Buidseat Teachd-a-steach**

### **Declarations of Interest:**

**Ms J Douglas and Mr K Gowans declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.**

**Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the basis that his wife was an employee of High Life Highland and advised that if there was any specific discussion affecting his wife's employment he would leave the room.**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/01/17 dated 13 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the Care and Learning revenue budget position to the end of December 2016.

During discussion, Members emphasised that the Council had a duty of care to its staff and expressed concern regarding vacant posts and the significant pressure on the remaining staff to continue to provide the level of service required which, it was suggested, was contributing to increased sickness absence.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the forecast outturn for the 2016/17 financial year; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Red/Amber/Green status of budget savings.

## **6. Care and Learning Capital Programme – Monitoring Report Prògram Calpa a' Chùrainm agus an Ionnsachaidh – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh**

### **Declarations of Interest:**

**The following Members declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion:-**

**Mr A Christie – Director of Highland Small Communities Housing Trust  
Ms J Douglas – Director of High Life Highland  
Mr K Gowans – Director of High Life Highland**

**Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the basis that his wife was an employee of High Life Highland and advised that if there was any specific discussion affecting his wife's employment he would leave the room.**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/02/17 dated 18 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which outlined the position of the Care and Learning



capital programme as at the end of December 2016 along with the current status of the major projects that were underway. The report also advised on the outcome of the recent review of the Council's capital programme and some of the implications for projects in the currently approved programme. In addition, it provided an update on future investment priorities and the review of Inverness schools, with some immediate priorities recommended for approval.

The Chair reminded Members that the Director of Finance had indicated, at the last meeting of the full Council, that the capital programme was unaffordable in its present form. The Care and Learning Service was preparing a reprioritised list of projects and a meeting had taken place with Vice Chairs, officials and the budget team, with further meetings planned in early course. In relation to Inverness schools, he had asked officials to arrange a briefing for Inverness Members as soon as possible so that a view could be reached on how the various projects should be prioritised prior to consideration of the wider Care and Learning capital programme at the Committee on 1 March 2017. The agreed list of Care and Learning priorities and projected costs would then be presented to the full Council for consideration.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to staff for their efforts in relation to Wick Community Campus; the Tain 3-18 Campus, Broadford Primary School and Alness Academy;
- with regard to St Clement's School, whilst welcoming the installation of a modular annexe, the main building had a failing heating system and was in poor condition. The need for a new school was emphasised and it was suggested that the final sentence of paragraph 4.4 of the report be amended to "The nature of the modular units would allow them to be relocated to another site in the future, *when* funding was made available for a new school." However, the Chair explained that the Committee did not have the authority to do so and it was a matter for the full Council;
- given the significance of roll pressures, it was suggested that a separate report on the matter be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. The issue was not confined to Inverness schools and it was important that Members understood the full extent so they could make informed decisions. Disappointment was expressed at the length of time it had taken to publish updated roll projections and that they had not been appended to the report. However, thanks were expressed to staff for the work undertaken. On a request being made, the Chair confirmed that a link to the updated roll projections would be circulated to Members of the Committee;
- thanks were expressed to the Scottish Government for the grant funding award to support the development of Gaelic provision in Skye;
- Members queried how the future investment priorities set out in section 4.1 of the report had been decided upon;
- information was sought as to when Invergordon 3-18 campus would appear in the capital report;
- it was necessary to be more strategic and less reactionary in the future; and
- reference was made to the poor condition of Invergarry Primary School and a plea was made that it not be overlooked.

In relation to Inverness schools in particular, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed regarding the poor condition and inaccessibility of Charleston Academy and a feasibility study had been awaited for some two years;
- new schools took a long time to build and it was necessary to start now or the situation would become unmanageable. The Chair concurred and explained that the recommendation to prioritise Ness Castle Primary School had been included for that reason;
- Merkinch Primary School was still under significant pressure, despite temporary classrooms having been installed on site, and the roll was projected to rise. It had been assessed as one of the poorest schools in Highland in terms of condition, suitability and sufficiency and had only one hall for assembly, dining and PE, which was detrimental to both pupils and staff. In relation to the proposal to locate the family centre adjacent to the school and nursery, the site was too small and concern was expressed regarding the loss of green space. Concern was also expressed that it was not being given the priority it deserved, given that it did not feature in the list of capital projects appended to the report and that, at the full Council in December 2016, it had been listed as an aspirational project. It was hoped that Inverness Members would take cognisance of the condition of school and the fact that Merkinch was an area with high levels of deprivation and social issues. However, the appropriate way to deal with the prioritisation of projects was not at a briefing but at the City of Inverness Area Committee, where issues could be debated and voted upon, and it was suggested that a paper be presented to the next meeting. The Chair confirmed that the feasibility of a briefing taking place in sufficient time for a report to be presented to the City of Inverness Area Committee prior to the Committee on 1 March 2017 would be investigated;
- there were significant issues in terms of capacity and concern was expressed that these had not been fully addressed. As new housing developments came on stream and the population increased, it was essential that the necessary school places were available. The Chair reiterated that it would be for the full Council to decide how much funding to allocate to the Care and Learning Service to build schools. In addition, he explained that officers had been tasked with looking at why schools were becoming so expensive and what might be done to save money – eg innovative design methods;
- reference was made to the previous Committee decision to recruit four additional members of staff to the Care and Learning Estates Team and an assurance was sought that there was now sufficient capacity to cope with the significant workload arising from the capital programme;
- information was sought on how long the phased refurbishment of Inverness High School would take;
- to improve educational outcomes, it was necessary to provide welcoming spacious light buildings with outdoor facilities;
- pupils who had attended Merkinch Primary School then moved on to Inverness High School had never experienced modern school facilities;
- Members would naturally support schools in their own ward unless there was a clear means of comparison and it was suggested that a matrix be provided setting out the roll, condition etc of every school so an informed decision could be made. Other Members disagreed that they would support schools in their own ward and stated that they would prioritise based on the greatest need in terms of attainment, deprivation, building condition etc;
- capacity issues had evolved over the years and now extended across the whole city, although some areas were under more pressure than others. It was evident

that the allocation of £48m was insufficient and a more realistic figure was in the region of £100m. Inverness Members needed to unite for the benefit of the city, look at the situation holistically and come forward with a case that could be presented to the Council and that, if proven, would mean Inverness would get the investment it needed;

- Inverness was expanding at a significant rate and the Council did not have the funding necessary to address the capacity issues. Schools in the south of Inverness were capped and concern was expressed that pupils would have to be transported out of the area at an ongoing cost or taught in portacabins. The situation was exceptional and it was suggested that the Council make a case to the Scottish Government for additional funding or stop building new houses; and
- information was sought on whether there was a process in place whereby officers could speak to other Councils to find out how they had dealt with similar issues. The Chair confirmed that officers liaised with their counterparts in other authorities on an ongoing basis.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** that:-

- i. the Tain 3-18 Campus project continue to be progressed on the basis that additional funding will be allocated from the SSER – Future Projects budget heading within the Care and Learning capital programme as set out in paragraph 3.10 of the report;
- ii. the decision to grant an exception to Contract Standing Orders for the procurement of a replacement modular unit at Broadford Primary School be homologated as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the report;
- iii. options for further medium term solutions to address the accommodation issues at St Clement's School be explored as set out in paragraph 4.4 of the report;
- iv. details of the projects required in 2017/18 be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee on 1 March but that the contract for the works at St Joseph's Primary School be awarded, all as set out in paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the report;
- v. a new primary school at Ness Castle Primary school be approved as a priority project from within the £48M currently allocated for Inverness School projects, with a report to commence a statutory consultation to come back to a future meeting of the Committee as set out in paragraph 5.5 of the report;
- vi. the contract be awarded for the Cauldeen Primary School project as set out in paragraph 5.6 of the report;
- vii. design work be undertaken on the proposed extension and refurbishment project at Smithton Primary School as set out in paragraph 5.7 of the report;
- viii. a link to the updated school roll projections be circulated to Members of the Committee; and
- ix. officers investigate the feasibility of a briefing on Inverness Schools taking place in sufficient time for a report to be presented to the City of Inverness Area Committee to allow projects to be prioritised prior to consideration of the wider Care and Learning Capital Programme at the Committee on 1 March 2017.

## **7. Children's Services – Performance Report Seirbheisean Chloinne – Aithisg Choileanaidh**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/03/17 dated 17 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the performance framework for Children's Services.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance information.

## **8. Children's Services – Assurance Report Seirbheisean Chloinne – Aithisg Bharantais**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/04/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning, the purpose of which was to provide assurance to NHS Highland in relation to services commissioned and delivered through Highland Council. The content of each assurance report was informed by the Highland Health and Social Care Committee and discussion with the Child Health Commissioner.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- whilst acknowledging it was a complex piece of work, a timeframe was sought for the provision of a pathway or process to identify and assess children and young people with a learning disability across services in the health and social care partnership; and
- clarification was sought as to the £282k variance of the budget contained in the report, compared to those reported under the Revenue Monitoring item, for Commissioned Children's Services income from NHS Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the report and that Members' comments would be incorporated into a report to NHS Highland as part of the revised governance arrangements.

## **9. Statutory Consultation – Closure of Kinbrace Primary School Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Dùnadh Bun-Sgoil Cheann a' Bhràiste**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/05/17 dated 11 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which, following conclusion of the statutory consultation process, set out a recommendation to discontinue the provision of education at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed to officers for the work undertaken;
- reference was made to a letter opposing the closure, a view supported by a Local Member and which would be raised with the Scottish Government when the proposal was submitted to them;
- there was concern that this closure, and others, had been budget led and no cognisance had been taken of GIRFEC;
- although the Curriculum for Excellence placed great emphasis on peer engagement, Altnaharra Primary, a similarly small school, had received praise at a recent inspection. However, others highlighted the significant benefit of pupils being educated with their peers; and
- where possible, consultations should avoid holiday periods.

- \* The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the Council discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools.

**10. Statutory Consultation – Catchment Boundary between Lundavra Primary School and Inverlochry Primary School**  
**Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Crìoch na Sgìre-Sgoile eadar Bun-Sgoil Lunn Dà Bhrà agus Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Lòchaidh**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/06/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which sought agreement to conduct a statutory consultation proposing a minor change to the catchment boundary between Lundavra Primary School and Inverlochry Primary School.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the proposal to change the catchment boundary between Lundavra Primary School and Inverlochry Primary School, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

**12. Developing Young Workforce Update**  
**Fios às Ùr mu Leasachadh Sgioba-obrach Òg**

**Declaration of Interest:**

**Ms J Douglas declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Inverness College but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/08/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on work done by the Council's Developing the Young Workforce team in conjunction with schools and partners - employers, colleges, parents and Skills Development Scotland. The report supported a presentation introducing a new and improved work experience process for schools and demonstrating the new web based platform that had been developed.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- there were sectors facing a recruitment crisis, such as teaching, health and social care, and when considering workforce planning it was important young people were made aware of where there was demand;
- clarification was sought as to what support was provided to Looked After Children in terms of career development;
- additional information was sought, and received, as to the work being undertaken with Nursery staff in developing the young workforce;
- the increase in females considering careers in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths was welcomed;
- it was hoped that funding for the initiative would continue post 2019;
- the challenges of rurality could affect destinations and outcomes for young people and it was important this was measured and, if necessary, addressed;
- the new web based platform was a useful tool for parents as well as pupils and it was important to try and engage with as many parents as possible; and
- there was merit in considering the development of an App.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress being made on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce agenda;
- ii. **AGREED** to endorse the Hi-Hope work experience process as the common platform to be used by Highland schools when organising work experience, with a review to take place in Spring 2018; and
- iii. **AGREED** to the extended funding plan to be ring fenced until the end of session 2018/19.

### 13. Closing the Attainment Gap A' Dùnadh a' Bheàirn Bhuileachaidh

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/09/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which summarised progress on the "Scottish Attainment Challenge" in designated Highland Council schools in the context of the wider Highland strategic plan.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- as schools were going to be held to account, clarification was sought as to what measures would be used and how they would be evaluated;
- although deemed as a positive destination if a young person went on to further education or was in employment, it was questioned if this was a positive destination if they were not doing what they initially had wanted to do. There was therefore merit in undertaking a survey to compare what Highland Council thought was a positive destination in comparison to the views of young people;
- there was concern at the level of attainment compared to other areas and there was some ambiguity as to what was actually meant by the phraseology around the term "attainment";
- disappointment was expressed that there appeared to be a shift away from what was best for individual pupils to a more collective approach;
- while it was important to support those pupils who struggled, it was important to also encourage those who excelled;
- the innovation funded projects were welcomed but there was benefit for schools to work closer with other youth services to get the best outcome for young people;
- achievement in Highland had evolved over time and was a combination not only academic attainment but all the other measures surrounding the education of young people. This was evident from Education Scotland inspections who now no longer looked solely at a school's academic success but looked at wider achievement agenda;
- it would be useful for Members to have Insight assessment information for their local schools to see where they were placed at a Highland and national level;
- all schools had an attainment gap but circumstances varied in each school. A "one size fits all" approach was not therefore appropriate and schools themselves were best placed to determine how this could be addressed; and
- clarity was sought, and received, as to why Head Teachers had been unable to recruit staff to support projects which would close the attainment gap.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the report on progress in the "Scottish Attainment Challenge" programme.

#### **14. ICT in Learning and the Virtual School ICT ann an Ionnsachadh agus san Sgoil Bhrìghheil**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/10/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update with regard to the ICT in Learning Strategy. This included information on the process and strategy to deliver the “schools ready” programme to Highland schools that would start to receive Chrome devices from August 2017, as well as progress on establishing a Virtual School provision.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- whilst generally welcoming the strategy and recognising the benefits which would be gained, there was concern that the programme could slip and it was important that Members were kept informed of progress and of any potential difficulties. In response, the Chair pointed out that the Resources Committee at its meeting on 8 February was due to consider the Council’s role in providing the necessary infrastructure involved in the roll out programme of chrome devices to schools;
- issues such as internet connectivity and the fabric of some school buildings could cause difficulties limiting the reach of the wireless network and additional access points might be required. Accordingly, it was important that network reliability was tested and that any necessary improvements were undertaken;
- the project, if successful, would provide a level playing field for those living in remote areas. Certain subjects, such as languages or Gaelic Medium, could now be taught in areas where before there was no such provision;
- there was potential to explore the possibility for income generation by providing virtual classes; and
- information was sought, and received, as to the replacement policy for chrome devices and whether any parental contribution would be sought.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to endorse the work being taken forward as part of the ICT in Learning Strategy, and
- ii. **APPROVED** the “Schools Ready” action plan and the authority training workflow model.

#### **15. Chief Social Work Officer Report 2015/16 Aithisg Àrd-Oifigeir na h-Obrach Sòisealta 2015/16**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/11/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which introduced the annual report by the Chief Social Work Officer for 2015/16.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the annual report.

#### **16. Time for Inclusive Education Ùine airson Foghlam In-ghabhailta**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/12/17 dated 16 January 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which explained that the “Time for Inclusive Education” (TIE) campaign had raised awareness of the bullying experienced by LGBT+ pupils in

schools. National statistics showed that there was a significant negative impact due to bullying on the mental health of LGBT+ young people in schools. Members had requested that this report be presented to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee to provide information on how LGBT issues were being addressed in Highland schools and how bullying relating to gender identity or sexual orientation was being tackled in Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- monitoring of this form of bullying should continue into the future;
- the provision of material and support to school staff to tackle LBGT bullying was welcomed;
- it was important to raise awareness and to change social attitudes that many LBGT groups encountered;
- bullying not only took place in schools but in the work place and there was merit for a report to be submitted to the Communities and Partnership Committee on this issue;
- bullying had long lasting negative effects and it was hoped that the approach taken to tackle LBGT bullying could be expanded to tackle bullying generally. In this regard it would be useful for Members to consider similar reports and how bullying on grounds such as race and religion could be addressed;
- concern was also expressed for those doing the bullying bearing in mind the background that might have lead them to carry out such behaviour;
- caution was urged about not labelling young people too early;
- information was sought, and received, as to how information from the survey had been shared with parents;
- the views expressed by some parents should also be taken into consideration when raising awareness of this targeted bullying;
- reference was made to a recent workshop highlighting LBGT issues and it was suggested that using senior pupils as role models and to promote positive behaviour would benefit not only would those experiencing bullying but the senior pupils themselves;
- concern was expressed at the significant level of LGBT respondents to the survey who had attempted suicide at least once as a result of bullying. This highlighted the need for mental health first aid to be provided in schools;
- all forms of bullying were wrong but certain groups needed particular protection. It was pointed out that Highland Council, as an Education Authority, had a duty under the Equality Act to address and prevent prejudice and disadvantage in relation to certain protected characteristics, including gender and sexual orientation; and
- for individuals to be comfortable with themselves they also needed to be comfortable with the characteristics of others and therefore there was a need for mutual respect.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to endorse the progress made in addressing homophobic and transphobic bullying in Highland and the ongoing actions to monitor the impact of this work and increase inclusive practice in Highland schools; and
- ii. that a report on the work being undertaken on all aspects of bullying be submitted to a future meeting.



## 17. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 2 August 2016;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Child Protection Committee – 23 August 2016;
- iii. **NOTED** the draft Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers – 4 November 2016;
- iv. **NOTED** the draft Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers – 4 November 2016;
- v. **NOTED** the draft Minutes of the Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee – 17 November 2016;
- vi. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 18 November 2016; and
- vii. **NOTED** the draft Minutes of the Community Justice Partnership – 1 December 2016.

Arising from the Minute of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group held on 2 August 2016, the Committee **AGREED** that a report be brought back to a future Committee explaining why the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership was underspent despite an increase in alcohol prevalence.

The meeting concluded at 3.40 p.m.