

The Highland Council

Minutes of the **Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 9 November 2017 at 2.05 pm.

Present:

Representing the Management Side:

Ms K Currie
Mr J Finlayson
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R MacWilliam

Representing the Teachers' Side

Ms A MacDonald (EIS)
Ms C McCombie (EIS)
Mr A Sutcliffe (SSTA)
Mr S Tillman (EIS)

Also Present:

Mr B Alexander, Joint Secretary, Management Side/Director of Care and Learning
Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side

Officials in Attendance:

Ms R Bell, Policy Officer, Care and Learning Service
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager, Care and Learning Service
Ms J Sikkema, HR Business Partner, Chief Executive's Office
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Ms A MacDonald in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie and Mr A Mackinnon.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 23 June 2017

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 23 June 2017.

4. Budget Update

The Director of Care and Learning provided an update on the budget during which it was explained that the current projection was a budget gap of £150m over the next five years and £30m in 2018/19. It was understood that the Scottish Government would announce the future budget settlement on 14 December 2017. In addition to the existing Redesign Board, thematic groups

had been established to progress proposals in terms of efficiencies, prioritisation, income and commercialisation. In relation to the Care and Learning Service budget in particular, the projected overspend for 2017/18 was now approximately £2.5m, slightly greater than previously reported, largely due to Looked After Children placements. The position generally became more challenging towards the end of the financial year and the Administration had asked the Chief Executive to re-examine corporate vacancy monitoring arrangements. The Care and Learning Service monitored all vacancies throughout the year but service managers would be advised that monitoring processes would become more rigorous. However, this was less likely to include Devolved School Management, Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), Scottish Attainment Challenge and child health budgets as they were earmarked for particular purposes.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

5. Scottish Government Education Governance Review

The Director of Care and Learning provided a verbal update on the Scottish Government Education Governance Review, during which it was explained that a group comprising CoSLA representatives, Chief Executives and Directors of Education and Children's Services had been established over the summer. Following a series of meetings with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, an agreement had been reached whereby Regional Collaboratives could appoint a Regional Improvement Lead. Every Regional Collaborative had since done so and the Lead for the Northern Alliance was Gayle Gorman, former Director of Education and Children's Services, Aberdeen City Council. A caveat by the Cabinet Secretary was the requirement for an improvement plan from each Collaborative in January 2018. Work was underway and it was hoped to circulate a draft plan to LNCT colleagues in December prior to consideration by local politicians and submission to the Scottish Government in January 2018.

In addition, it was explained that proposals for an Education (Scotland) Bill had been published earlier in the current week. The consultation would continue until the end of January 2018 and would inform the content of the Bill, which, it was anticipated, would be considered during the current parliamentary session. The proposals were slightly different to what was set out in "Next Steps"; most significantly there was no duty on Head Teachers to close the attainment gap. However, there were still some issues, particularly in relation to staffing, that would be of interest to Teachers' Side colleagues and discussions would take place over the coming weeks.

The Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, commented that EIS and the other unions would be taking full part in the consultation and any response would be informed by a national response in the first instance.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

5. Work Plan Review 2017/18

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/01/17 dated 1 November 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, commented as follows:

National Improvement Framework

National discussions on Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSA) had taken place with the Scottish Government, the outcome of which was guidance that was acceptable to the unions. An assurance had been given that SNSAs would replace, not add to, what currently existed and would inform teachers' professional judgement. The Teachers' Side was concerned that the Council's proposals were not acceptable and looked forward to further discussions to avoid any potential dispute.

In relation to the Pupil Equity Fund, it was suggested that the tight timeframe imposed upon local authorities by the Scottish Government, combined with the need to justify items within already over-burdened School Improvement Plans (SIP), had led to time running out. There had been reports of SIPs being returned on multiple occasions and it was understood that one Plan had only been approved in the current week. Concern was expressed that the process was too bureaucratic. However, the appointment of additional staff to facilitate matters was welcomed, as was the provision of extra training for those who required it.

With regard to moderation, reference was made to the activities that had begun during the September in-service days and concern was expressed that, if those days were a baseline, things would become overly bureaucratic and unsustainable.

Management of Schools

In relation to School Management Structures, it was hoped that the views of schools involved in phase 2 would be fully considered and that decisions would not be driven by financial constraints in the main. The future of the workforce in Highland was currently within these schools and the education of pupils could not be adversely affected as this could damage the future of the region as a whole. The need for a consistent approach to engagement was emphasised.

With regard to Early Learning and Childcare, plans were wholly dependent on facilities and staffing being not just adequate but more than adequate.

In relation to Workforce Planning and Recruitment, whilst it was recognised that recruitment of staff remained an issue, the Teachers' Side was wary of "fast track" courses that claimed to prepare prospective staff for the rigours of teaching in a 21st century Highland school.

With regard to Leadership, the Teachers' Side had no knowledge of what the bespoke training plans for staff consisted of and would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the associated group, as well as the group that had been established to share good practice.

Whole School Job-Sizing Reviews/PT Entitlement Reviews

The Teachers' Side looked forward to being involved in this area of work and kept informed as to which schools were being considered. It was requested that information be provided to the LNCT Executive Group prior to commencement of the timetable in LNCT 3.

Violence and Aggression

The Teachers' Side thanked the Head of Additional Support Services for the excellent work done following data collection, and looked forward to the results of the training etc referred to in the report. However, assurances were still sought that everything possible was being done to support staff immediately following an incident. A major area of concern was that other staff, often the Head Teacher, had to cover for affected staff and this was detracting from the management time available. This had the inevitable knock-on effect of increased workload and stress. It was hoped that such instances were being taken into consideration empathetically by Quality Improvement teams.

Review of HR Policies – Flexible Working

Flexible working remained an issue for teaching staff due to the nature of the job and the Teachers' Side would welcome as much leeway as possible, such as application of LNCT 37 on Special Leave, particularly where the member of staff had young children or was registered as a carer for a member of their close family. The opportunity to job-share should remain a consideration and the ability to apply for a temporary reduction in hours for a fixed period, possibly of not less than a specified time, should be considered.

Review of LNCT Agreements

Good progress had been made and there remained Agreements that required revisiting such as 5, 6, 8, 16, 20, 22 and 25. In addition, it was suggested that LNCT 3 be looked at as Teachers' Side discussions had highlighted a discrepancy between the working at the start of the document and the timetable in the appendix.

The Joint Secretary, Management Side, having acknowledged the comments made, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the position in respect of:
 1. National Improvement Framework
 2. Management of Schools
 3. Whole School Job Sizing Reviews/PT Entitlement Reviews
 4. Violence and Aggression
 5. Review of HR Policies
 6. Review of LNCT Agreements;
- ii. **APPROVED** LNCT 23: Appointments Procedures – Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the deletion of:
 - LNCT 1: LNCT Recognition & Procedure Agreement
 - LNCT 7: Framework for Continuing Professional Development and Professional Review and Development
 - LNCT 30: Principal Teacher (Pre-School Education) Job Specification and Appointments Procedures

The meeting concluded at 2.20 pm.