

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	PEO 21/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: People

Date: 15 March 2018

Report Title: **Management of Schools**

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on developments regarding the management of schools programme and to make recommendations on next steps.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to agree the next steps, set out in section 5 of the report.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 During May/June 2015, a series of stakeholder seminars were held regarding the challenges facing schools and Highland Council in delivering affordable and sustainable high quality education. This led in October 2015, to Members agreeing a new strategic approach to the management of schools because of the:
- Sustained requirement for Head Teachers to maintain quality and drive school improvement.
 - New corporate management systems, placing new demands on school management.
 - Pressures on time to manage, especially for Primary Head Teachers who are also class committed.
 - Challenges filling Head Teacher and other management posts.
 - Continued challenges presented by the Highland geography.
- 3.2 This Management of Schools Programme is now embedded in the Programme for Highland Council and involves six interrelated workstreams:
- Curriculum Delivery
 - Management and organisation of schools
 - Support for Schools
 - Early Learning and Childcare
 - Workforce Planning and Recruitment
 - Workforce Planning and Staff Development
- 3.3 At an early stage, Members agreed key principles and objectives for the programme, involving:
- The need to revisit existing cluster arrangements that had largely developed as a reaction to local recruitment difficulties.
 - Build new arrangements around Associated School Groups (ASGs) and natural communities and, as far as possible, around the child's learning journey from 3 – 18 years.
 - Support for Headteachers to be the leaders of Learning and Teaching, assisted in the organisation of the school by efficient processes and systems and by the most relevant other services.
 - Like other rural authorities, moving to a model of non-class committed Headteachers, involving an overall reduction in number by 30/40.
 - Enhanced support for leaders and future leaders into management roles.
 - Reviewing the pay and conditions of school managers, taking account of job-sizing requirements, to address current and possible inequities.
- 3.4 This work has been supported by Service managers, a seconded Programme Manager and other Services including the Corporate Improvement Team.
- 3.5 Regular updates and briefings have been provided to Members over the last three years, including the recent report to Committee in January 2018. The most recent seminar was held on 2 March, given the need to reflect on the direction of the Programme.

- 3.6 Progress has been achieved across the various workstreams, as set out in the January Committee report, and including:
- Introduction of the 33 period week across all Secondary Schools, with increased common timetabling.
 - eLearning, the use of Google-Suite for Education and Chromebook roll-out.
 - Revised FM structure.
 - New model of office and administrative support being tested.
 - Six ELC graduate posts and thirteen childcare managers.
 - Flexible childcare hours in 55 schools and electronic data base to manage flexible care.
 - Early, generic Primary staff recruitment.
 - Online and social media advertising.
 - Framework for leadership development being developed.
 - Mentoring and coaching support.
 - New management and ASG arrangements in Phase One schools.

4. Management and organisation of schools

- 4.1 The management and organisation of schools is a key workstream, focussing on the concept of what defines a school – e.g. single-school or cluster arrangements and 3-18 models. We are seeking to set out an organisation and grouping of schools which will help sustain education for Highland communities, including rural communities.
- 4.2 This work has involved:
- Developing frameworks for a variety of school management structures across different age ranges, with a focus on the educational benefits that can be gained for managing the learner journey from 3 to 18 years of age.
 - Establishing new school groupings around communities which will allow Highland to provide a sustainable education model into the future.
- 4.3 Phase One arrangements were put in place in eight Associated School Groups (ASGs) over the last year. At the October 2017 Committee, Members agreed that ten Associated School Groups should be progressed in Phase Two:
- Mid – Fortrose, Dingwall and Tain
 - North - Wick and Thurso
 - South – Inverness High, Inverness Royal Academy and Nairn
 - West – Gairloch (and completing Mallaig)
- 4.4 Area management teams have been progressing discussion with Headteachers, staff and Parent Councils in these Phase 2 ASGs. This began with discussions with Headteachers over a number of months and is using the process agreed by Committee for stakeholder engagement.
- 4.5 As part of this process, the Service took stock the outcome of that engagement in early February. While a firm proposal had emerged from each of the ASG engagements, and most were supported by communities, some were not.

- 4.6 Members were updated about these proposals at the recent seminar, including that they involve fairly limited change, and while some save small amounts, the overall financial impact would involve a cost increase of £140k.
- 4.7 It is the view of the Service Directorate that these proposals do not provide a model of provision that is affordable and sustainable into the future and neither do they provide confidence about educational benefits. This analysis was presented at the recent Members' seminar and has been reported back to Headteachers and the parent forums involved in the ASG engagements.
- 4.8 Headteachers have offered a range of perspectives regarding this. Many state that they would welcome clearer and more ambitious strategic direction to the programme. Others describe the challenge of being in a difficult position in the middle of this process, between the authority and parent groups. Some express concern about the anxiety that these various discussions are causing for them and their staff.
- 4.9 Accordingly, the following proposals are recommended to Members. These mean that, at this stage, officers are not recommending any new arrangements for any of the ASGs that were included in Phase Two. Instead, we propose further engagement about these issues and a range of measures to ensure the achievement of the objectives of the Council for sustainable education across our communities.

5. Proposals

- 5.1 Discussions and planning with all stakeholders regarding Phase Two have indicated that we were over ambitious in setting out to undertake detailed planning in ten ASGs at the same time, comprising a third of the authority's provision. These are complex issues requiring full consideration, of critical importance to communities, the Council, and the provision of local education for years to come.
- 5.2 It is proposed that future engagement should enable sufficient time and focus on a smaller number of ASGs, promoting understanding of the options and opportunities regarding any new arrangements. Indeed, there should be a rolling programme of engagement and consideration of recommendations, not tied to any specific phased cycle. This would include regular briefings to the appropriate ward business meetings and the involvement of Local Members in community engagement.
- 5.3 Given the need to ensure sufficient care is taken with these processes, it should be recognised that the current approach to the recruitment of Headteachers, including holding posts on a temporary basis, may not be sustainable.
- 5.4 Further to the most recent round of engagement, the authority should confirm that St Josephs and Bishop Eden Primary Schools are Inverness-wide resources, and should not be included in discussions about the Inverness High School ASG.

5.5 The following measures are also proposed:-

1. The authority should establish a steering group, comprising Service managers and representatives from senior (cross party) Members, Head teachers, staff side and parent councils. The group would act as a 'sounding board' for the development and consideration of proposals, prior to and following community engagement, and prior to consideration by the Service Directorate and Strategic Committee.
2. We should invest in articulating and restating the purpose, vision and objectives of the Management of Schools Programme, learning from best practice across Highland. This should include describing the financial and operational challenges, and the educational benefits of cluster models and 3-18 provision. It should make clear that this is a priority Highland Council improvement programme.
3. The authority should hold discussions with the Highland Parent Council Partnership about holding seminars, or similar events, to highlight, share and discuss the principles and objectives of the Management of Schools Programme.
4. The authority should initiate a formal evaluation of the outcomes of the Programme to date, including engagement with Head Teachers and other stakeholders.
5. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of a matrix model which might help determine the combination of schools within any local management structure, based on identified variables, such as: numbers of schools and school campuses, school roll, levels of need and deprivation, Head Teacher and Teacher recruitment, distance between schools and transport infrastructure and size of catchments. This could lead to greater clarity about the number of schools in any cluster arrangement and the consequent management arrangements.
6. Consideration should be given to aspects of the programme that can be supported by other Services across the Council, or other Council improvement processes.
7. We should seek to articulate and learn from the shared experience of other Northern Alliance authorities regarding sustainable education, including holding a summit on this issue, and also considering the advantages of a combined change team.

6. Implications

6.1 Resource

The Management of Schools programme is predicated on ensuring sustainable education in local communities, which means affordable as well

as quality provision. It recognises that Council budgets will remain challenging for a number of years to come and that strategic change is preferable to unplanned budget reductions.

The Phase 2 proposals that have emerged from the recent engagements would involve additional costs for the Council of £140k. It is not recommended that any of these are implemented at this stage.

The proposals included in this report would involve enhancing the programme management resource, through further engagement with other Services and the corporate improvement team, and/or secondments within the Care & Learning Service.

6.2 Legal

All changes to education provision must take account of the relevant education legislation.

6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

These proposals are based on the concept of local education at the heart of sustainable communities. This is a message that requires to be articulated more clearly as part of the programme.

6.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever

It is envisaged that new management and organisational arrangements for schools, can make best use of our buildings and other assets.

6.5 Risk

This programme is of critical importance to communities, the Council, and the provision of local education for years to come.

6.6 Gaelic

All proposals should take full account of the Council's commitment to the promotion of Gaelic medium education.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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