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| Agenda Item | 11. |
| Report No | PEO 22/18 |

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: People

Date: 15 March 2018

Report Title: Early Learning and Childcare Update

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the current position on the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. It includes the latest position on the additional graduate proposals for Highland and proposes a review of the childcare manager role.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to
- i. note the revised plans for delivering 1140 hours by 2020;
 - ii. note the latest position on the additional graduate posts; and
 - iii. agree the review of the childcare manager role.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 As detailed in previous reports to Committee, the Scottish Government has committed to extend the entitlement of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds, from 600 to 1140 hours a year by 2020. Local authorities were required to submit their initial Delivery Plans to the Scottish Government in September 2017, detailing how they would deliver this commitment.
- 3.2 Following submission and review of the local authority delivery plans, it became clear that there was disparity between the budgets that authorities said they would need to implement the expansion programme and what was initially indicated would be available.
- 3.3 It was subsequently agreed in a proposal made by COSLA that revenue and capital funding for 2018/19 should involve a one year settlement, to allow sufficient time for the Scottish Government and local authorities to review their cost estimates for the following years.
- 3.4 It was also agreed that all authorities should resubmit their revenue and capital projections against updated planning guidance, by 2 March 2018.

4. 2018/19 settlement

- 4.1 The 2018/19 settlement for Highland does not allow the proposed phasing of the expansion of ELC across the authority, which would have involved all centres increasing to 780 hours in August 2018.
- 4.2 The Management of Schools report submitted to this Committee on 25 January 2018 informed Members of this and it was agreed that Highland would implement the full 1140 hours for a smaller number of children, on the basis of the following principles:
- 1140 hours should be available first to those children who would benefit most – i.e. those living in areas of disadvantage, including rural disadvantage.
 - There needed to be space and capacity.
 - Centres should not be in locations where parents already paying for wraparound care were likely to transfer from other centres, thus making those less viable.
 - There should be representation from across the authority, including childminder, local authority and third sector providers.
- 4.3 Officers have mapped provision on the basis of the following criteria:
- Socioeconomic and SIMD indicators of disadvantage
 - Child Poverty figures
 - Free school meals entitlement

4.4 44 sites were identified that met these criteria and these included local authority and partner providers. Each was considered in terms of the other criteria above, and the available funding.

4.5 This work has confirmed that it may be possible to fund up to 9 settings to deliver 1140 hours from August 2018. Further work is required to confirm the detail of these arrangements, at the following centres:

4.6 South

All settings in Merkinch, Inverness, involving the local authority nursery which offers provision to 3 and 4 year olds, the family centre which supports eligible 2 year olds and a partner provider that also offers provision to eligible 2's.

4.7 West

The nursery in Kyle has available accommodation and staffing to deliver 1140 hours to 3 and 4 year olds. Also, Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar has available accommodation, located in the Caol area which offers nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds in the medium of Gaelic.

4.8 Mid

Obsdale Primary, Alness has capacity to deliver 1140 hours from summer 2018 and could stabilise the current capacity issues across the other local provision, along with two nurseries in Invergordon - Park and South Lodge.

4.9 North

The only provision in Wick with sufficient capacity to deliver 1140 hours from August is Norlin, which is shortly to become a CALA managed partner centre. It would be intended that the whole of Wick should offer 1140 hours from the start of the school year in 2019.

5. **Financial templates**

5.1 The government re-issued financial templates for 1140 hours in January 2018, along with detailed guidance to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland. Officers have been working to meet the deadline for the submission date in early March.

5.2 The original capital programme detailed in the Delivery Plan to the Scottish Government in September 2017 was based upon the incremental phasing of hours year on year, which has now had to change. This has required a comprehensive review of the capital and revenue plans.

5.3 The costings now submitted to Government remain projections but take account of the refreshed national guidance, revised plans for flexibility and rigorous scrutiny of the various assumptions that need to be made about the process, with both national and regional colleagues.

5.4 The revised projection for capital costs by 2020/21 is £25.9m. This reflects the challenge of the Highland geography and the range of provision, as it exceeds what might be available from standard CoSLA distribution formula.

5.5 The revised projection for revenue costs in 2020/21 is £24.8m, and again this exceeds what might be available through standard CoSLA distribution formula.

5.6 Both revenue and capital projections have reduced as a consequence of the most recent work and this will enable further constructive dialogue with the Scottish Government, which has committed to the full funding of this initiative.

6. Additional Graduates

6.1 As detailed in the report to this Committee in January, the Scottish Government has agreed to fund 6 additional graduate posts and Highland submitted a plan for the placement of these.

6.2 As stipulated by the government, the additional graduate will either be a BA Childhood Practice graduate or a teacher with early years expertise. The applicants could be existing staff undertaking training.

6.3 The post will offer direct 'hands on' support to children in nurseries in areas of deprivation, in order to further address the poverty related attainment gap.

6.4 The proposed sites are:

- Newton Park, Wick
- Lundavra, Fort William
- Millbank, Nairn
- Merkinch Family Centre, Inverness
- Hilton, Inverness
- Peripatetic post shared between Park and South Lodge, Invergordon

6.5 We are awaiting feedback from Government to determine whether these proposals can go ahead. Meanwhile, we are sharing learning with the other Northern Alliance Early Years leads and have developed a job description which has been evaluated and is ready to go to advert. The proposed start date is June 2018, to enable time over the summer for induction, preparation for the role and training for the postholders to commence work with children from the start of the school term.

6.6 The posts will be subject to government scrutiny with the impact on children measured and evaluated. The Northern Alliance has made a further commitment to ensure a collaborative approach to supporting these posts, including developing a peer support network.

7. Childcare Managers

7.1 As Members are aware, 13 posts of Childcare Manager were developed to support the expansion of ELC in larger nurseries that had the potential to offer maximum flexibility to parents and provide out of school care for all primary children in each setting. The intention was that the income targets for these settings would fully fund the posts within 2 years of appointment.

- 7.2 Although placed in local authority nurseries and managed by the head teacher, the role provides support to smaller link nurseries that do not meet the criteria for a dedicated childcare manager.
- 7.3 The service is growing and expanding quickly, and in order to move away from a system which handled over 1500 manual invoices with a high error rate (and with unpaid bills), we have moved to direct debit or voucher payments, captured within a database which is evolving to capture all of the expanded service requirements. The Care and Learning Service is working closely with the corporate improvement team to ensure these systems are fit for purpose.
- 7.4 The Childcare Managers have a key responsibility to ensure the systems are fully tested, functioning and rolled out, working with shared business support and school clericals across those sites that are offering flexibility.
- 7.5 However, the balance between these administrative functions, the professional leadership role of the role and the need to maximise income from wrap around care, has created challenge in the implementation of the post. Further, and critically, the initial income targets are not being met.
- 7.6 It is still early days in the development of the childcare manager role but it is clear that the duties and responsibilities in the current job description should be reviewed and evaluated. It is further proposed that, through the Northern Alliance Early Years Officers, a collaborative approach be taken to develop a leadership and management programme to support the role.

8. Implications

8.1 Resource

The Scottish Government has stated it will fully fund the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, and the re-submitted Financial Template will provide realistic expectations of the required funding for Highland.

The additional graduate posts will be funded by the Scottish Government for 2018/19

8.2 Legal

Dependent on funding, these actions will fulfil the Councils statutory responsibilities and ensure the principles of the Scottish Government expansion programme and policies are met.

8.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

The proposed settings detailed in the report for 1140 hours ensure that children living with the impact of inequality, poverty or rural deprivation are prioritised.

8.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

None

8.5 Risk

This remains a high profile and significant development programme, taking place within a short time scale and without agreed funding as yet, which offers significant risk.

8.6 **Gaelic**

There is an opportunity to expand provision for Gaelic.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 5 March 2018

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