

Agenda Item	8
Report No	G/8/20

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Gaelic Committee**

Date: **5 November 2020**

Report Title: **Gaelic Communication and Engagement Strategy**

Report By: **Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek member approval for the high level strategic approach to developing a Gaelic Communications Strategy and Plan

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the approach to developing a Gaelic Communications Strategy and agree the timescale for bringing the Communications Plan back to Committee.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource: The Strategy and Plan will be developed using existing resources and in collaboration with the Corporate Communications Team.
- 3.2 Legal: The Council Gaelic Development Communications Strategy will be consistent with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and help to advance the commitments and objectives set out in the Gaelic Language Plan
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island) Part of the Strategy, once implemented, will be to engage effectively at community level with the public, stakeholders and partners and an improved strategic approach to Gaelic communications will have a positive impact on rural and island communities.
- 3.4 There are no implications with regard to Climate Change/Carbon Clever; and Risk.
- 3.5 Gaelic: There will be positive implications for Gaelic in the development of a planned approach to Gaelic communications and engagement.

4. Workshops

4.1 On 27 September a series of workshops were organised for Gaelic Committee Members. The main aim of the workshops was:

- to engage with Gaelic Committee Members to plan the way forward on how The Highland Council will prioritise and implement across all Council Services the key actions within GLP3 set against the backdrop of *'Using Gaelic, Learning Gaelic and Promoting Gaelic'*

The workshops took place via Microsoft Teams and were facilitated by the Gaelic Team.

4.2 The first workshop was to discuss enhancing our corporate approach to Gaelic development throughout the Council and the development of Communications and Engagement Strategy. In the course of the discussion, the following points were made:

- The Council should actively promote the work of the Gaelic Team
- It was important to communicate effectively internally across Council Services and externally to the general public
- It would be important to identify audience and modify message accordingly
- Music, culture and heritage should all be utilised to attract interest in Gaelic
- The use of traditional media, ICT and social media platforms should be maximised
- Visibility of Gaelic on THC website should be enhanced
- Traditional music, heritage, history, environment including topography, sport (shinty and football) key factors to support Gaelic
- Partnership working with key stakeholders was crucial to Gaelic development
- Review and identify key stakeholders
- Corporate 'buy-in' was needed across all Council Services
- The overall visibility of Gaelic should be increased

4.3 Because of the way in which the workshops were structured, not all Gaelic Committee members were able to participate in all sessions and a number expressed an interest in having the opportunity to return to the subject of Communications for a further discussion. On that basis, it is proposed to set out an outline strategic approach for members' consideration which will form the basis of a further member workshop prior to bringing the Strategy and Plan back to the Committee for approval.

5. Outline Strategic Approach

5.1 The **purpose** of our Communications Strategy is to

- Raise the profile of Gaelic language heritage and culture both internally and externally
- Encourage more people to Use Gaelic, Learn Gaelic and Promote Gaelic
- Communicate our overall organisational Gaelic Plan objectives
- Engage effectively with stakeholders and partners
- Ensure people understand what we do
- Change behaviour and perceptions where necessary
- Demonstrate the success of our work

5.2 **How** we will do this:

- Identify internal and external stakeholders
- Agree and tailor our key messages
- Improve collaboration and partnership working

- Identify and use the most effective communications methods
- Identify significant events and initiatives to be spotlighted
- Refresh content on the Highland Council Website
- Identify internal improvement actions:
 - Prioritise areas of Council service delivery on which to focus
 - Refresh Gaelic awareness training for staff and members
 - Improve Gaelic impact assessments in committee reports
 - Ensure adherence to existing guidelines in Council publications
 - Ensure adherence to the Council Bilingual Signage Policy.

5.3 We will **measure** success by

- Issuing a survey to canvas stakeholder views and to baseline current performance
- Develop a Plan with SMART targets and performance measures
- Provide regular updates to Committee

6. **Next Steps**

6.1 Officers will develop a stakeholder survey to capture views on the Council's current approach and opportunities for improvement. This will be widely distributed, and the responses used to help inform the development of the Strategy. A date will be identified for a further session for Committee members to review the outcomes from the survey and develop the Communication and Engagement Strategy and Plan. Once this has taken place, the Strategy and Plan will be brought back to the Committee for approval at the first meeting in the new year.

Designation: ECO Performance and Governance

Date: 28 October 2020

Author: Kate Lackie

Background Papers: