

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held remotely on Thursday 11 February 2021 at 10.35 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs I Campbell	Ms E Knox
Mr A Christie	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr S Mackie
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr L Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr G Ross
Mr A Graham	Mr A Sinclair
Mr T Heggie (Vice Chair)	Ms N Sinclair

Religious Representatives:

Mr R Finlay
Ms S Lamont
Mr W Skene

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Henderson	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs I MacKenzie	

In attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources
Ms L Walker, Education Support Officer
Mrs F Shearer, South Area Manager, Education and Learning
Mrs B Cairns, Principal Educational Psychologist
Ms T Mackie, ICTiLearning, Improvement & Strategy
Mr R Quigley, ICTiLearning, Improvement & Strategy
Mr D Paterson, Quality Improvement Officer
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)
Mr J Hasson, Highland Parent Council Partnership
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Teachers and pupils from Inverness Royal Academy

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 J Finlayson in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair thanked school staff, parents, guardians, pupils, Council officers, Public Health staff and all other stakeholders for the resilience and flexibility they had shown in the face of another lockdown and a further period of remote learning. He added that, whilst recognising the many and continuing challenges being faced, it was important to acknowledge the positive work taking place in schools supported by parents, third sector groups and other key stakeholders.

He went on to explain that, given the timescales for distributing the agenda and papers, some detail in the reports might already have been superseded, or would be superseded in the coming weeks, and officers would provide an update, where appropriate, when introducing the reports.

Finally, he indicated that there was no Public Health representative in attendance as they were all extremely busy supporting the fight against Covid and the vaccination programme. However, the Director of Public Health had attended the Health and Social Care Committee the previous day and, it was hoped, would be present at the next meeting of the Education Committee.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 4 – Mr A Baxter (non-financial), Mr A Christie (financial), Mr K Gowans (non-financial), Mr A Jarvie (non-financial), Ms E Knox (non-financial), and Ms N Sinclair (non-financial)

Item 5 – Mr A Baxter, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Jarvie, Ms E Knox and Ms N Sinclair (all non-financial)

Item 6 – Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie and Ms N Sinclair (all non-financial)

Item 7 – Mr A Christie (financial), Mr A Jarvie (non-financial) and Ms N Sinclair (non-financial)

Item 9 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial)

3. Good News/Outstanding Achievements Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item on the basis that he was the parent of a child who attended Inverness Royal Academy 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.

Ms L Walker, Education Support Officer, informed Members of outstanding achievements by pupils and schools, a digital summary of which had been circulated in advance of the Committee.

In addition, teachers and pupils from Inverness Royal Academy gave a presentation on their journey to gaining the Silver Award as part of the Rights Respecting Schools Award Programme and being the first secondary school in Highland to do so. Topics covered included Curriculum, Positive Behaviour Policy, LGBT+ and Social Media and Events, as well as the journey to achieving the Gold Award.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members commended the inspirational and thought-provoking presentation, and welcomed the emphasis on global and responsible citizens in The Curriculum for Excellence being realised;
- young people often taught older people about the values of respect and empathy and it was good to see that young people not only learned such values but were willing to stand up for them;
- it was disappointing that a small number of complaints had been received and, in that regard, information was sought, and provided, on what the school/school community could do to spread the message to the wider community about the importance of respecting the rights of students, including those within the LGBTQ community; and
- it was important to share the experience of Inverness Royal Academy to encourage other schools to take part in the Rights Respecting School initiative.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the outstanding achievements and the accompanying presentation.

4. Education and Learning – Back to School Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh – Air Ais dhan Sgoil

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 Baxter – parent of children in primary and secondary school

Mr K Gowans – parent of a child in primary school

Ms E Knox – Trustee on the Board of Thriving Families

Ms N Sinclair – parent of children in nursery and primary school

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland 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.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/01/21 dated 15 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair informed Members that the Return to School Project Board, which both he and Councillor Graham MacKenzie attended, had been reinstated and had met twice so far in 2021. In relation to the presentation referred to on the agenda, this had been circulated to Members to view in advance of the Committee.

The Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning explained that the purpose of the report was to provide an update on the directives and guidance received from the Scottish Government with regard to schools opening, provision of education and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), including expectations of support for families and communities during the continued Covid restrictions. However, many of the points within the guidelines had been superseded following the First Minister's announcement on 2 February on the phased managed return of ELC and schools, and a detailed update was provided on the progress made to date. Further guidelines were awaited from the Scottish Government to inform updated school safety guidance, guidance on the testing programme, and technical guidelines and support for secondary school practical work. There would be a further announcement on 16 February regarding the return to school and all of the work taking place would be dependent on the scientific data provided. The response by children and young people, parents, all staff and officers to the latest announcement had been outstanding and officers would continue to react with agility and integrity but at the same time it was necessary to think to the future and maximise what had been learned over the last year, particularly in terms of curricular developments, choice and offer.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the update on mental health provision in schools was welcomed, and appreciation was expressed to officers for the work that had taken place in that regard;
- whilst the immediate priority was the return to school and ensuring that pupils and school staff were safe, it was important to look to the future and ensure that the pupils impacted by the pandemic could catch up on lost learning. Remote learning provision had been impressive, particularly during the current lockdown and in secondary schools, but it was no substitute for face-to-face learning;
- information was sought, and provided, on what discussions had taken place with Trade Unions, teachers representatives and civil servants regarding the next stage after the return to school and what provision would be made for those who needed it most to bring them back to the level they should be at; whether

discussions had taken place with the Deputy First Minister about the additional resources required for school communities to address the issue of lost learning; and the Council's assessment, in a Highland context, of the detailed Scottish Government guidance on the return to school, and what representations were being made where the guidance did not fit with how education was provided in Highland. In relation to the need to interpret the Scottish Government guidance at local level, the Chair commented that engagement with Head Teachers was crucial and weekly meetings were taking place to get their input. In addition, it was suggested that if Members had any specific issues they wished to highlight they be emailed to the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning in the first instance so they could be discussed with the Chair and fed into the ongoing discussions with the Scottish Government;

- tribute was paid to the members of the Return to School Project Board for the comprehensive and coherent approach to the return to school, and the thorough anticipation of issues rather than dealing with them in a reactive manner;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that music instructors would be supporting pupils' practical assessments when schools returned;
- it was queried whether officers were content with how lost learning had been assessed after the first lockdown and what was being done to ensure that lessons learned were taken into account when looking to assess the latest gaps in provision;
- the lack of interaction/socialisation young people had experienced in recent months would potentially lead to behavioural issues when they returned to school, and several Members suggested making school facilities available during the Easter holidays for voluntary engagement events, potentially utilising High Life Highland staff and volunteers, whereby young people would have an opportunity to take part in activities, talk to each other and express anxieties. Suggested activities/services included drama, sporting activities, digital access to counselling services, and digital detox;
- tribute was paid to the former Director of Care and Learning, Bill Alexander, for his vision and initiative in implementing the Chromebook rollout;
- staff were commended for their professionalism, resilience, innovation and adaptability to the rapidly changing circumstances;
- in relation to the vaccine rollout, a number of teaching unions had made a robust case to the Scottish Government for the prioritisation of teaching staff, which made sense to many people, and the prioritisation of Additional Support Needs (ASN) staff who could not maintain physical distance from the children they supported was welcomed;
- public health remained the overriding issue and disappointment was expressed that there was no public health representative in attendance. The Chair explained that the Director of Public Health had given a presentation to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee the previous day, which he suggested be circulated to Members of the Education Committee for information. In addition, the Director of Public Health had given an assurance that he would attend the next meeting of the Committee, and Members questions, specifically in relation to education, would be sought in advance;
- information was sought, and provided, on the Council's view as to the strategic approach required to overcome Covid;
- information was sought, and provided, on the mechanisms in place to enable teachers to report concerns regarding Covid safety measures, and whether they could be assured such concerns would be investigated and addressed. The Chair commented that such matters were usually reported at school level in the

first instance but issues could also be raised with HR or through the confidential staff helpline. Members added that there were many reasons why staff would not want approach a manager, and it was suggested that consideration be given to a simple online form or portal. It was important that such issues were collated centrally and solutions put in place;

- the importance of the partnership between parents, teachers and pupils in terms of maintaining the learning journey throughout the pandemic was emphasised;
- information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to support pupils through the return to school, which would be a stressful experience for many;
- it was queried whether the Broad General Education had been more challenging to deliver via remote learning than the senior phase, and how it would be known, in two or three years, whether young people had caught up on lost learning;
- concern was expressed regarding the delivery of the secondary school curriculum, some aspects of which were better suited to online delivery than others;
- provided local authorities met the SQA's requirements there would be consistency of delivery and assessment across Scotland. However, it was necessary to ensure that the appropriate delivery platforms were in place;
- parents had generally been understanding and supportive of school staff. However, concerns had been raised, at parent council meetings, regarding lost learning and transitions;
- it having been queried whether consideration had been given to allowing pupils to repeat a year to recover lost learning, it was explained that there was no legislation in that regard at present;
- there was no reference to a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment in the implications section of the report, and it would be helpful to include this in future reports;
- consulting with children, young people and families would be key to getting the new ASN allocation model right;
- a plea was made that children who had a Child's Plan be involved in the review of the Child's Plan process;
- it having been queried why some schools had counsellors and others did not, it was explained that the resource sat with Associated School Groups and a report on the impact of counselling provision on young people and communities would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- the number of mental health initiatives taking place was welcomed, as was the possible date for a mental health seminar in April 2021; and
- Appendix 2 of the report included some of the issues previously raised by the Children and Young People's Forum, namely, that local improvement was not necessarily best made by comparing with other local authorities, that qualifications were not necessarily the best measure of improvement for all children and young people and that consideration should be given to positive school destinations.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the directives and guidance provided by the Scottish Government to schools, settings, families and communities;
- ii. **NOTED** the criterion and flexibility provided by the Scottish Government to support The Highland Council in the provision and prioritisation of keyworker childcare;

- iii. **NOTED** the criterion used for vulnerable children to access in-school/setting support in line with Scottish Government recommendations and the additional flexibility implemented by The Highland Council to take into account the context of Highland communities to maximise the support for vulnerable young people identified locally;
- iv. **NOTED** the governance put in place to ensure a multi-agency decision making process;
- v. **NOTED** the plan for mental health and wellbeing support for staff and young people during this time;
- vi. **AGREED** that the presentation by the Director of Public Health to the Health and Social Care Committee on 10 February 2021 be circulated to Education Committee Members for information; and
- vii. **AGREED** that there would be a presentation by the Director of Public Health, specifically in relation to education matters, at the next meeting of the Committee, and that Members questions would be sought in advance.

5. Education and Learning - Remote Learning Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh – Ionnsachadh Air Astar

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 Baxter – parent of children in primary and secondary school

Mr K Gowans – parent of a child in primary school

Ms E Knox – Trustee on the Board of Thriving Families

Ms N Sinclair – parent of children in nursery and primary school

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/2/21 dated 13 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair commented that he hoped the report would give Members confidence in the work taking place in Highland schools at present, which was being recognised by Education Scotland and other national bodies as exemplifying good practice. In addition, it was hoped that the report demonstrated that what was being offered to learners in terms of digital and remote learning continued to be developed and improved.

At this stage, it had been intended to show a video recitation of a poem, written by Jo Fitzpatrick from Nairn Academy, which recognised the challenges that learners and school staff faced as they adapted and developed remote learning, and gave thanks for the work being undertaken by schools. Unfortunately, this was not possible for technical reasons but it was confirmed that a link to the video would be circulated to all Members.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- tribute was paid to teachers, leaders, support staff and early years practitioners, who had adapted quickly and cheerfully to the sizeable challenge of remote learning;
- Members with nursery and school-age children spoke to their own experience of online learning, and welcomed the fact that the Council had allowed schools the flexibility to adapt how they worked to suit their unique skillset and the wider community;
- nothing was better than face-to-face interaction, particularly for young children, and that was one of the biggest challenges at present;
- digital technology was a huge part of young people's education, entertainment and socialisation, and those who had not grown up with it had a responsibility to catch up. It was necessary to understand how social media worked in order to educate young people on its dangers, and to teach young people how to balance screen time with time outdoors, creative play and face-to-face socialising. It was also important to embrace the enormous possibilities of digital media and ensure everyone could access them regardless of geography or income. Schools were already rising to this challenge and the report was welcomed;
- it was questioned whether the new way of working that had emerged during lockdown was the beginning of a more comprehensive approach to the use of digital technology in schools and the associated implications for the health and wellbeing of young people;
- families had been at home for an extended period over the winter months and many would be struggling to keep their homes warm. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that information on the support available had been distributed to all parents. In addition, information was sought, and provided, on the advice and support being provided to teaching staff who were working from home, and it was confirmed that details of how to claim tax relief had been distributed via the staff newsletter;
- information was sought, and provided, on the processes in place to monitor those children with whom it was difficult to engage online, particularly lower achieving pupils and those with ASN who did not respond well to self-directed learning;
- the Chair of the Highland Parent Council Partnership (HPCP) explained that the HPCP had hosted an online training session for parents on digital learning. This had included a presentation by Tania Mackie from the Council's Education Improvement Team which had been worthwhile and thought-provoking. One of the points that had arisen was the need to look at things in more depth, not only from the children's perspective but from the parents' point of view, and discussions were taking place with officers regarding further developing the presentation and whether there was anything that could be done to enhance the wellbeing of parents, who were not accustomed to home-schooling, at the present time;
- the Council had been proactive in the way it had handled online safety and tribute was paid to Robert Quigley, ICTi Learning Officer, for his work with children and parents in that regard;
- there was an opportunity to provide more advice on informal learning, particularly for parents on the pros and cons of the various online platforms young people used in their own time; and

- a concerning national trend, which appeared to disproportionately effect ASN pupils and which had been accelerated by lockdown, was the number of parents taking their children out of the school system altogether. Some parents would welcome a hybrid of home-schooling and online lessons, and it was suggested that steps be taken to engage with parents who had made or were on the verge of making the decision to take their children out of school regarding what new ways of delivering education the Council could offer to support their children.

The Committee:-

- AGREED** the strategic direction for digital learning and skills in Highland schools as set out in paragraph 6.1 of the report;
- NOTED** the plans and position for supporting the effectiveness of remote learning across the Highlands;
- scrutinised and **NOTED** the progress made to support remote learning across Highland, including the support for digital inclusion; and
- AGREED** the ICT in Learning strategy for 2021.

6. Short, Medium and Long-Term Action Plan – Education and Learning Plana-gnìomha Geàrr-ùine, Meadhan-ùine is Fad-ùine – Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh

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 Baxter – parent of children in primary and secondary school
Ms N Sinclair – parent of children in nursery and primary school

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/03/21 dated 12 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair emphasised the importance of the Action Plan given the uncertain times and the ever changing educational landscape. The Plan was very much led by the current empowerment agenda which was being promoted at all levels of education from Scottish Government to classroom level and, as well as being flexible and subject to change, was being driven by both national advice and Head Teachers who knew local circumstances best. The Plan would evolve and the Education Committee would continue to receive feedback at future meetings, not only about the Plan itself but about the outcomes being realised from it;
- confirmation was requested as to the permanency of the Education Improvement Team. Despite indications that an operation framework proposal would be

considered at a full Council meeting this had yet to take place. As a result there were many Head Teachers who had been acting up for up for two years, putting a strain on the Senior Management Team level. There were personnel issues too which would come into play regarding entitlement to posts and, accordingly, to give certainty and to be fair to staff, parents and pupils concerned, this needed to be addressed. In response, the Chair highlighted the benefits of secondments but assured Members that the Service was moving forward with setting the structure; and

- the core objective of the Plan was to close the attainment gap but it was important that the focus was not a statistical exercise and that every child achieved their potential in terms of achievements and attainment.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the short, medium and longer term priorities as described in the report; and
- ii. that further reports on the progress of the action plan would be taken to future Education Committees for challenge and scrutiny.

7. Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) 1140 Hours 1140 Uair a Thìde de Thràth-Ionnsachadh is Cùram-Chloinne

Declarations of Interest:

Ms N Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item on the basis that she was a parent of children in nursery and primary school 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 their involvement in the discussion.

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland 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.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/04/21 dated 15 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair informed Members that confirmation had now been received from the Scottish Government that, as anticipated, August 2021 was the revised date for the roll out of 1140 hours. This item provided an opportunity to update Members on the final 19 settings due to deliver 1140 hours from August 2021;
- as there were no officers from the Council's Estate Team present, the Chair suggested that queries regarding individual settings should be addressed at Ward Business Meetings. However, Members expressed regret that their specific queries could not be answered at the meeting, in an open and public

forum. These officers were integral to the delivery of the overall project and should be in attendance;

- looking at the programme of work, many projects had the target date of August 2021, with none opening between April and August. The ethos of 1140 hours was to provide flexibility with either full-time provision during term time or part-time provision all year round. If facilities were not to open before August 2021 this prevented those who needed childcare during the summer from accessing it. In response, the Chair pointed out that it was often necessary to carry out capital works during the summer when pupils were not at school;
- given the length of the programme and the associated issues it was suggested that a seminar or Special Meeting of the Committee be held to explore matters in more detail;
- there were risks associated with buildings, some of which were visible whilst others were hidden hazards;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the capacity issues reported within the Care Inspectorate and the degree to which this could impact on the roll out;
- the provision of 1140 ELC hours was important not just to children but to families;
- in some areas of Inverness, where schools were capped, there were anomalies where some families were able to access 1140 hours but others, living close by but in a different catchment area, were not. Consequently, it was important to look at alternative interim arrangements to bring forward 1140 hours until capital works were addressed;
- the provision of 1140 ELC hours was a critical element of the Recovery Plan as it enabled parents to return to work;
- conflicting information had been provided as to the delay in providing ELC in Milton of Leys Primary School. The Head of Resources undertook to provide the Ward Business Meeting with up-to-date information as to the status of this project; and
- there were various issues affecting the provision of ELC at Kinmylies and Muirtown Primary Schools and it was requested that the Head of Resources or an Estates Team officer attend a Ward Business Meeting where these could be explored in more detail.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the updated position regarding ELC and provision of 1140 hours;
- ii. the further progress towards delivering 1140 hours in all Highland settings;
- iii. the current status of ELC capital projects and work being taken forward to progress project delivery;
- iv. the updates provided regarding ongoing discussion with the Scottish Government and other local and national developments;

and **AGREED**:-

- v. that officers attend the next Ward Business Meetings to discuss the arrangements in respect of Milton of Leys, Kinmylies and Muirtown Primary School Nurseries respectively;
- vi. that Estates Team representatives be requested to attend future meetings of the Committee to respond to questions on specific capital projects; and
- vii. that consideration be given to how to better engage with Members on the final 19 ELC settings and the associated contingency plans.

8. Review of the statutory consultation exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School
Ath-sgrùdadh air an eacarsaich cho-chomhairle reachdail gus sgìre-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig a stèidheachadh airson Bun-Sgoil Gheàrrloch

There had been circulated Report No EDU/05/21 dated 12 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair commented that the Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School was ongoing. This process was in response to the statutory guidance issued by Bord na Gaidhlig which recommended that local authorities create catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the proposal set out within the Consultation Report (Appendix 1) and associated appendices;
- ii. **NOTED** the representations received and the report from Education Scotland (Appendices 3i-3iv); and
- * iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School on the basis set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report, namely, to create a Gaelic Medium catchment that overlays the current English Medium catchments of Gairloch Primary School, Poolewe Primary School, Bualnaluib Primary School and Kinlochewe Primary School.

9. Revenue Budget Monitoring 3rd Quarter 2020/21
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach 3^{mh} Ràith 2020/21

Declarations of Interest:

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest on the basis that a close relative was an employee 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 his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/06/21 dated 13 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The financial impact of the pandemic was acknowledged, along with significant additional expenditure being incurred to support education recovery. However, some positive signs of improvement in the forecasts were highlighted.

Concern was expressed over any proposal to cut Additional Support Needs for financial savings as part of the forthcoming budget. In addition, the underspend in Devolved School Management (DSM) reserves was highlighted and it was requested

that that the underspend should be considered for Easter engagements to benefit students.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the revenue budget outturn forecast for the year;
- ii. the improvement in forecast and the reasons as set out within the report; and
- iii. the remaining risks and uncertainties relating to the financial position as a result of Covid-19, and in particular the risks relating to the ongoing impact of the current lockdown, and continuing pressures that will be faced for the remainder of this financial year, and potentially extending into 2021/22.

10. Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers Geàrr-chunntas na Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail airson Thidsearan

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 9 December 2020.

The meeting concluded at 14.20 pm.