

Agenda Item	<b>9</b>
Report No	<b>G/11/21</b>

## **THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL**

**Committee:** Gaelic Committee

**Date:** 18 May 2021

**Report Title:** Gaelic Vision and Strategy for Highland

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

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the Committee on the steps being taken for the review and development of the Highland Council's Gaelic Vision and Strategy and associated planning and delivery requirements.

### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i) consider the approach to developing the Council's Vision and Strategy for Gaelic; and
- ii) comment on any aspects that should be included in the review.

### **3. Implications**

3.1 Resource: The Gaelic Vision, Strategy and Plan will be developed using existing resources and in collaboration with the Gaelic Team, Education Team and internal and external stakeholders. It not anticipated that additional resource will be required, except for the use of existing Scottish Government capital funding to initiate a feasibility study for the expansion of Gaelic in Inverness, with specific consideration of the viability of a 3–18 campus.

3.2 Legal: The approach will be consistent with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 and help to advance the commitments and objectives set out in the Council's Gaelic Language Plan.

3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island): Part of the approach to developing the Vision and Strategy for Gaelic in Highland will be to engage at community level with the public, stakeholders and partners. This, combined with a more pro-active approach to Gaelic communications is intended to have a positive impact on rural and island

communities. There will be attention paid to closing the attainment gap for Gaelic learners who have additional support needs.

- 3.4 There are no direct implications with regard to Climate Change/Carbon Clever; and Risk.
- 3.5 Gaelic: There will be positive implications for Gaelic language, learning, and culture in the Highlands.

#### **4. Gaelic Vision and Strategy Introduction**

- 4.1 The Council's strategic approach to Gaelic is set out in its third iteration of the Gaelic Language Plan which is aligned to the National Gaelic Plan and the provisions contained in the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. There are six priority areas in the Plan: Gaelic in the Home, Early Learning and Childcare; Gaelic in the Community; Gaelic in Education; Gaelic in the Arts, Culture and Heritage; Gaelic in the Workplace; and the Social, Economic and Cultural Value of Gaelic.
- 4.2 The GLP3 runs from 2018–2023. Time taken now to review the Council's vision and strategy for Gaelic will mean the Council will be well placed to prepare for GLP4. Alongside this, the Council will need to engage closely with Bòrd na Gàidhlig as the Government's delivery agent for Gaelic and also to take cognisance of any new commitments/requirements initiated in the Programme for Government which is expected to be launched following the conclusion of the Scottish Parliamentary Elections in May 2021.
- 4.3 Initial work is underway and a series of internal workshops have taken place to start to scope out the remit of the review across the six priority areas. Initially looking at Gaelic Education and Gaelic in the Workplace. There will also be opportunities through workshops for Gaelic Committee Members to fully contribute to the process and, as part of this, to agree priorities for 1, 5 and 10+ years ahead.
- 4.4 It has already come through very clearly that staff are committed to a vision that is ambitious and sustainable, building on the many opportunities there are to work with partners locally and nationally to expand Gaelic education, language and culture in the Highlands. There will be a strong focus in the review on education and sustainability has been identified as a critical factor, in particular responding to the additional challenges that Covid has created, alongside long-standing pressures in relation to staffing and workforce planning. Looking at raising attainment for all learners will be a priority, as is widening curriculum choice, content and wider opportunities to use the language so that there can be a sustainable increase in the numbers learning and speaking Gaelic at all levels. In addition to increasing ELC and Primary GME and language provision, the review will be looking at what can be done to expand Gaelic at secondary level, including options for the development of a 3–18 campus in Inverness. Engagement with UHI, Bòrd na Gàidhlig and the Scottish Government is ongoing and will form part of our stakeholder discussions.
- 4.5 In addition to a focus on education, strong themes are emerging about the need for enhanced Gaelic presence across all Council Services, including the website; and highlighting and supporting the contribution that Gaelic makes to the Highlands in terms of culture, tourism and the economy.
- 4.6 Critical to making progress will be the identification of sustainable resourcing which means access to both capital and revenue funding; high quality curriculum and extra curriculum content and choice; and reliable teacher supply as well as maximising the

impact that the Council and partners can have on the numbers of people at every age who learn Gaelic, speak Gaelic and use Gaelic in school and wider community and cultural settings. This can only be achieved by taking a connected, partnership approach.

## **5. Outline Strategic Approach**

5.1 We will be working across a range of ECO remits to fully explore opportunities to grow Gaelic language and culture within the Council and across the Highlands and empowering communities to identify spaces where Gaelic can be used and working in partnership to sustain Gaelic in those communities where it still has resilience and wide daily usage. Officers will engage with key stakeholders, including children and young people, teachers, parent groups, the Scottish Government, Gaelic organisations and our public sector partners and will adopt a community-led approach. Securing additional external funding and maximising the impact of resources in collaboration with our partners will necessarily be a core aim to achieve these ambitions.

### **5.2 Purpose**

The review of the Council's Vision and Strategy for Gaelic is intended to identify the Council's key strategic priorities to ensure that resources and effort are focused on the areas that will deliver the most positive outcomes for the protection and growth of Gaelic language and culture in the Highlands.

5.3 How we will do this:

The key messages, aims and priorities contained in our Vision and Strategy will reflect those of the National Plan and continue with the current commitments within the GLP3 whilst working towards the new generation Gaelic Language Plan for 2023–2028.

The approach will:

- Consider the unique needs, opportunities and challenges of all our Highland communities in rural, semi-rural and urban areas
- Identify internal and external stakeholders and arrange tailored workshops and engagement events
- Undertake a detailed mapping of current Council provision and resources across all schools and ELC settings and work with partners to overlay external provision to identify gaps, collaboration and duplication
- Engage with public sector partners – the Scottish Government, Bòrd na Gàidhlig, HLH, HIE, and other local authorities to ensure strategies and resources align and opportunities for collaboration are maximised
- Provide regular feedback opportunities and workshops for Members of the Gaelic Committee and Education Committee
- Develop a Strategic Vision Statement for Gaelic
- Produce a communications and media engagement plan

5.4 The areas being considered for the remit of the review include:

- A feasibility study for 3–18 provision in Inverness
- A timeline for long, medium and short-term planning for Gaelic education developments across Highland, particularly where there is strong demand and support for expansion e.g. Portree High School
- Aspirational and ambitious curriculum rationale models of accreditation that allow greater flexibility within secondary pathways – such as the acquisition of National 4

or National 5 within BGE to support flexibility of subject choice during senior phase and allow pupils to have recognition of their commitment to GME as well as achieve accreditation of a national qualification in Gàidhlig to evidence this

- Expansion of the Council's Gaelic Accreditation offer during the Senior Phase by connecting classrooms using virtual platforms utilising the Highland Virtual Academy
- National 5 Gaelic Learners to be available via the Highland Virtual Academy and a Gaelic teacher has been appointed to the Academy to deliver and support development of our Gaelic curriculum offer
- Identification of areas of risk where there is potential need for mitigation in workforce planning
- Consideration of the application and impact of existing Gaelic Development resources and opportunities for enhancement including the identification of priority cross cutting themes between education and community learning and development work
- Developing a partnership approach with the Scottish Government and public and third sector partners to sustain Gaelic in those communities where it still has resilience and wide daily usage
- Working across the Council and with partners to promote Gaelic in the Arts, Culture and Heritage and to maximise the economic benefits of Gaelic language and culture
- Refreshing the Council's corporate approach, including: ensuring the messages are reflected in Education and Learning Action Plans and in the wider Directorate Service Planning process; opportunities for staff to develop their language skills; reviewing Gaelic content on the website and wider media and social media presence
- Identification of policy updates that may be required

5.5 We will measure success by:

- Issuing a survey to canvas stakeholder views and to baseline current perceptions of performance; this will be followed up by annual surveys to track progress
- Develop a Strategic Plan with SMART targets and performance measures,
- Provide regular updates to Committee

## 6. Next Steps

6.1 A stakeholder survey will be issued to capture views on the Council's current approach to provide a baseline; to identify opportunities for change and improvement; and seek information about preferred methods of engagement. This will be widely distributed, and the responses used to help inform the development of the review, including the timeline for development and reporting. A date will be identified for a further session for Committee Members to review the outcomes from the survey and develop the Vision for Gaelic Strategy and Plan.

Designation: ECO Performance and Governance

Date: 6 May 2021

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Background Papers: