

## The Highland Council

Minutes of the **Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers** held remotely on Tuesday 28 June 2022 at 3.00 pm.

### Present:

#### Representing the Management Side:

Ms S Atkin  
Ms H Crawford  
Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Millar

#### Representing the Teachers' Side

Mr L MacKenzie (EIS)  
Ms S Mills (SSTA)  
Mr S Tillman (EIS)  
Ms G Warburton (EIS)

### Also present as observers:

Mr J Grafton, Management Side  
Mr A Jarvie, Management Side  
Mr D Louden, Management Side

### In attendance:

Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side  
Ms N Grant, Joint Secretary, Management Side/Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning  
Ms C Macklin, Head of Service, Primary Education and Early Learning and Childcare  
Ms F Grant, Head of Service, Secondary Education  
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager  
Ms R Bell, Policy Officer  
Ms J Sikkema, HR Business Partner  
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator

### Mr L Mackenzie in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Cockburn, Mr C Munro and Ms S Rawlings.

At this stage, the Committee Administrator informed the Committee that Mr J Finlayson had been appointed as Chair of the Management Side for the current Council term. This was **NOTED**.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes of Meeting held 9 November 2021

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee

for Teachers held on 9 November 2021.

#### 4. Work Plan Review 2021-22

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/01/22 dated 14 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- in relation to the Education and Learning Action Plan 2021/22, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, commented that a lot of good work had been done and it was hoped this could be built upon positively moving forward. It was added that it would be beneficial to school staff to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of Collaborative Lead Officers and Quality Assurance and Moderation Support Officers (QAMSOs). In response, and for the benefit of new Members, the Head of Service, Secondary Education, summarised the background to the two roles and explained that Collaborative Lead Officers were paid by the local authority to look at education standards whereas QAMSOs were a professional learning support to increase capacity to look at spreading good practice around assessment and moderation. The Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, added that QAMSOs would play an important role going forward given the focus on moderation and assessment as part of raising attainment. In response to a question, the Head of Service, Secondary Education, confirmed that both primary and secondary school practitioners were undergoing QAMSO training and there would be a minimum of one QAMSO in every Associated School Group;
- in relation to the Devolved School Management (DSM) Review, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, welcomed the revised staffing formula, particularly the additional staff in the largest schools. However, Highland was still relatively near the bottom of the list in terms of staffing levels when compared with equivalent schools in other local authorities. The revised formula was therefore a starting point, and it was hoped that further changes could be made going forward; and
- for the benefit of new Members, the Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager provided an overview of LNCT Agreements, particularly LNCT 30 Self-Fund Sabbaticals, a new Agreement which had been circulated for approval and which provided guidance on the process to be followed for reviewing requests and allowing sabbaticals in a fair and equitable manner.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position in respect of:-
  - a. Education and Learning Action Plan 2021/22;
  - b. Devolved School Management Review;
  - c. Improving Diversity in Education;
  - d. Safeguarding in Education and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Improvement Plan;
  - e. Whole School Job-sizing Reviews/ Principal Teacher Entitlement Reviews; and
  - f. Review of LNCT Agreements; and
- ii. **APPROVED** LNCT 30 Self-Funded Sabbaticals as set out at Appendix A

of the report.

## **5. Work Plan 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/02/22 dated 14 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Head of Service, Secondary Education, and the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, introduced the report and summarised the various workstreams in the Work Plan.

During discussion, the following matters were raised:-

- in relation to the Education and Learning Service Plan 2022/23, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, expressed concern regarding the potential negative impact of further reducing Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision. Whilst the money available for ASN remained the same as in recent years, it was not going as far due to things such as increased national insurance contributions, rising wages and new schools opening. It was acknowledged that some schools had gained and that the arrangements were more straightforward than they had been previously, a school's allocation now being based upon those pupils in levels 3 and 4 of the matrix of need. Nevertheless, concern was expressed that the lessening of support might have a negative impact on things such as the mental health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff and raising attainment. New Members having queried whether schools evaluated the impact of reduced support and if there was scope for schools to feedback that the allocation model was not working, the Chair of the Management Side and the Education Committee suggested that a Members' Briefing was required on the allocation model and the issues surrounding ASN and he undertook to liaise with the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning and the Head of Service, Secondary Education, in that regard. He emphasised that the ASN budget was one of very few budgets that had not been cut in what were extremely difficult times, and that resource allocation ought to be based on need. The Head of Service, Secondary Education, added that resource was one aspect of ASN and she was in the process of looking at how to widen the discussion. It was important to have a good understanding of need in schools – ie where was the need, what was the nature of the need and what did the Council/the Highland community want to be able to support? Difficult choices would have to be made and decisions needed to be based on firm knowledge of what was happening in school settings;
- the Teachers' Side looked forward to engaging in the DSM Review, particularly in relation to improving the number of Principal Teachers (PTs) in secondary schools, schools in Highland having fewer PTs than equivalent schools in other local authorities. In addition, better allocation of management time was required to allow PTs to carry out their roles effectively. It was added that, currently, some schools in Highland had faculties, others had hybrid models and a small number had single subject departments led by a subject specialist, the latter being the Teachers' Side's preferred model. New Members having queried why there were fewer PTs in Highland than in other local authorities, a detailed explanation was provided of the current points system, the various arrangements in place in Highland schools and the role of the Workforce Planning and Staffing team in helping Head Teachers design appropriate management structures. It

was explained that the national empowerment agenda for Head Teachers meant that, going forward, Head Teachers should have more say over the management systems in their schools. However, that had to come within a budget. In that regard, it was explained that PTs of large faculties were highly paid posts whereas PTs of single subject departments were paid less but there could be more of them. Such discussions would form part of the DSM review going forward. It was emphasised that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work in Highland due to the huge variety of schools, secondary school roles ranging from 40 in rural communities to 1300;

- the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, emphasised the importance of looking after children and ensuring they were in quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. Safeguarding in Education and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Improvement Plan were therefore vital, particularly in light of Covid recovery. The majority of Covid restrictions ending was not a green light to revert to business as usual and the need for a clear and consistent message in that regard was emphasised. The health and wellbeing of both pupils and staff was key to a sustained recovery and it was necessary to ensure that premise was at the heart of everything the education authority did. He went on to refer to the training involved, commenting that two in-service days at the start of the new session could be of benefit as having training on the first day back would take up school time. The need for additional training/meetings, such as the termly network meeting for Guidance Teachers, to be incorporated in the Working Time Agreement for schools was emphasised. Similarly, it was understood that there would be further regular meetings, involving unpromoted staff, regarding an attendance policy and it was important these were included in the Working Time Agreement. It was emphasised that if new commitments/responsibilities were being brought in, something else had to make way for them.

The Committee **NOTED** the position in respect of:-

- a. Education and Learning Service Plan 2022/23;
- b. Devolved School Management Review;
- c. Improving Diversity in Education;
- d. Safeguarding in Education and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Improvement Plan;
- e. Whole School Job-sizing Reviews/ PT Entitlement Reviews; and
- f. Review of LNCT Agreements.

At this stage, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, commented that incidents of violence and aggression by pupils were increasing in both number and severity in some schools and there was a perception amongst staff that the education authority was not supporting Head Teachers as it should which was having a negative impact on morale. Any member of staff had a right to attend a safe place of work and it was important to ensure that was the case. Whilst there were positive behaviour practices in place, they were not always appropriate or effective.

Discussion ensued, during which it was suggested there might be a correlation with Covid and the associated uncertainty which had negatively impacted pupils, particularly those with ASN. The importance of reporting and dealing with incidents appropriately was emphasised and reference was made to a new electronic reporting system being implemented in the new session which it was

hoped would help. Elected Members referred to the Council's Central Safety Committee, which had a mechanism for reporting incidents, and encouraged teaching representatives to attend to put their concerns on record. The Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, confirmed that he had recently been invited to join the Central Safety Committee and he looked forward to seeing how it worked.

The Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, also expressed concern that the probationer teacher allocation for Highland had not been known until two weeks later than it should have been which had had a negative impact, some schools not having been notified of their staffing until the last week of term. However, it was recognised that there had been issues nationally and the Workforce Planning and Staffing Team had been short-staffed. Appreciation was expressed to the Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager for keeping him informed and it was confirmed that the Teachers' Panel was happy to work with the Workforce Planning and Staffing team to explore whether there was anything that could be done to help.

The Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager concurred that the delay was not acceptable. However, as indicated by the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, late allocation of probationers had been a national issue. In addition, the number of secondary school probationers allocated to Highland had been disappointing. She summarised the issues, including the challenges associated with allocating probationers in a large rural area like Highland as opposed to an urban authority, and paid tribute to her team who had gone above and beyond during what had been a stressful time for all involved. There was now new resource in the team and, going forward, a review of systems and processes would be carried out to ensure that the elements that were within the gift of the Council were carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The Head of Service, Primary Education and Early Learning and Childcare, added that the way Highland had looked after its staff was commendable, many people who had previously been on temporary contracts utilising recovery funding now having permanent employment with the Council as a result of the work that had taken place.

The meeting concluded at 4.00 pm.