

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 2 November 2022 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)

Mr I Brown

Mr P Logue

Mr W Mackay (remote)

Mr D Millar (remote)

Mr C Munro

Mrs M Paterson

### In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance

Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager

Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer

Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator

Miss R Ross, Committee Administrator

### Also in attendance:-

Mr J Whannel, Director of Education, Bòrd na Gàidhlig

**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 C Munro in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Grafton, Ms L Niven, Ms M Nolan and Mr R Stewart.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Good News

The Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- The Scottish Government Gaelic Capital Fund had awarded £594,000 for the Gaelic Unit at Broadford Primary School and £800,000 for the delivery of a 3-18 Gaelic Unit at Tain Academy.
- Scottish Government had made commitments to Gaelic and Scots with a Scottish Languages Bill: Consultation - a Members' Workshop would take place, on-line, on 8 November 1.30pm – 3pm.
- Perth Royal National Mòd Successes - almost 70 awards were attained by Highland competitors including 27 first, 29 second and 13 third prize winners. The

Gold Medal Winner was Annie Catriona MacDonald, originally from Skye, who was educated through Gaelic Medium at Sgoil Stafainn and Portree High School.

- Loganair National Gaelic Schools' Debate has returned with Nairn Academy, Lochaber High School, Portree High School, Gairloch High School, Ardnamurchan High School, Inverness Royal Academy B, Inverness Royal Academy A all participating.
- Gairloch Gaelic Language and Culture Event had taken place to provide parents with information and advice on the benefits of bilingualism and Gaelic medium education.
- Staffin and Kilmuir Primary Schools had received £4,000 funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Taic Freumhan Grant funding scheme to support a programme of events and activities for both schools, including a series of after school clubs and cultural events. The project would finish in June 2023.
- Leugh Is Seinn le Linda Highland Tour - Linda Macleod had visited approximately 20 Highland schools and communities as well as visits to Pàrant is Paisde and Croileagan groups.
- Two Gaelic Awareness Training Sessions were organised and delivered for Elected Members. The sessions would be available online for two months.
- Bilingual Interpretation panels were to be installed at the new Visitor Centre at the Old Man of Storr on the Isle of Skye.

Members welcomed the list of Good News, particularly the Royal National Mòd successes and it was suggested that the winners should be sent a letter of congratulations. These successes showed that the Gaelic language was in good health. However, Members also expressed disappointment that the Gaelic Committee no longer had simultaneous translation but were assured that officers were investigating compatible IT solutions.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Good News; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Council congratulate the Royal National Mòd winners.

#### 4. **Presentation - Bòrd na Gàidhlig - Gaelic Language Planning for Local Authorities**

Mr Jim Whannel, Director of Education at Bòrd na Gàidhlig, gave a presentation on Gaelic Language Planning for Local Authorities where he outlined the process and priorities for Gaelic Language Plans (GLP) and reminded Members that Highland Council had been the first Local Authority to develop a GLP and was now in the process of looking forward to its fourth edition. He emphasised the importance of GLPs and the need to ensure that Gaelic was embedded in all policies, procedures and workplaces to increase the normalisation of Gaelic. Furthermore, it was important to work with other public authorities, private organisations and Third Sector organisations to promote awareness of the relevance of Gaelic Language and Culture. Members were then informed of the current position of Highland Council's GLP4 which, it was hoped, would be supported to Bòrd na Gàidhlig by June 2023.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Gaelic teacher numbers were now at crisis level and Highland Council was having difficulty filling some positions and Bòrd na Gàidhlig assistance was

- critical. It was important to encourage Gaelic Medium teachers to come forward otherwise Gaelic would stagnate or, worse, go backwards;
- making Gaelic mainstream was supported;
  - preserving Gaelic was important as it was part of Highland's heritage;
  - Gaelic remained vibrant but targets needed to be appropriate and realistic; and
  - much could be achieved by collaborative working.

Having thanked Mr Whannel, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a summary of the measures used by Bòrd na Gàidhlig to encourage more Gaelic Medium teachers be circulated to the Committee.

## 5. Performance Against Gaelic Language Plan 3 (GLP3)

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/22 dated 28 September 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Gaelic Awareness sessions had been provided at the start of October and which was open to all Elected Members. Those who attended had enjoyed the sessions but numbers were relatively low. However, the training sessions would be made available on the Members' intranet to allow for individual training to be accessed so it was important to promote this to fellow Members.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 6. Community Learning and Development Key Developments

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/22 dated 18 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the work undertaken by the Community Learning and Development team was commended. However, particularly in relation to Gaelic Adult Learning classes it was suggested more could be provided online, especially as we came out of Covid with many still anxious about in-person gatherings;
- the use of Gaelic in Care and Residential Homes was strongly supported and it was suggested that perhaps Gaelic Medium schools might like to be involved and interact with the older Gaelic speakers;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the Highland Council engaged with parents interested in enrolling their children into the Gaelic Medium Education system;
- it was important Gaelic featured prominently on the Council's website and was promoted, particularly through social media; and
- the previous Ùlpan course used by the Council had now been replaced with the Speak Gaelic course. There was support available for any Elected Member wishing to take part, either in-person or online.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 7. Gaelic Development

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/22 dated 24 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Referring to the National Gaelic Plan, the Chair highlighted that Bòrd na Gàidhlig had gone out to consultation and 65% of organisations and individuals who responded had agreed with the direction of the draft plan. However, he sought, and was provided with, information as to the content of the responses from the remaining 35%.

The Committee otherwise:-

- i. **NOTED** the annual return to Bòrd na Gàidhlig;
- ii. **NOTED** Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Strategic Priorities which needed to be included in Highland Council's refreshed Gaelic Language Plan; and
- iii. **AGREED** to have a workshop to consider the draft response to the Gaelic and Scots and Scottish Languages Bill consultation.

## 8. Gàidhlig Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education – The Highland Council

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/22 dated 18 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- reference was made to the provincial Caithness Gaelic Mod and it was reflected how pleasing it was to hear children conversing in Gaelic. However, Members were being asked to consider what actions could be taken to support the development of Gaelic Education as this historically had been considered by previous Council Gaelic Committee. Information was sought, and provided, as to how this was actually being progressed;
- it was important to reflect how far Highland had come, especially over the last 30 years. Gaelic could now be heard in the playground, even by pupils who were not in Gaelic Medium Education;
- learning Gaelic at an early age helped individuals to learn other languages; and
- it was important for the Council to support GME and communities.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education across Highland; and
- ii. **NOTED** the areas of current and future development.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm