

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 23 November 2022 at 10.35 am.

### **Present:**

Ms S Atkin	Mr A Graham (substitute)
Mrs I Campbell	Ms M Hutchison
Mr A Christie	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Johnston
Ms H Crawford	Ms L Kraft
Ms S Fanet	Mr P Logue
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr R Gale (substitute)	Mrs P Munro
Mr J Grafton	Mrs M Reid

### **Religious Representatives:**

Ms S Lamont  
Mr I MacDonald  
Mr W Skene

### **Youth Convener:**

Ms C Munro

### **Non-Members also present:**

Dr C Birt (Teams)	Mr W Mackay (Teams)
Mr R Bremner (Teams)	Mr D Macpherson (Teams)
Mr D Fraser (Teams)	Mr J McGillivray (Teams)
Mr G MacKenzie (Teams)	Mrs T Robertson (Teams)
Mrs A MacLean (Teams)	

### **In attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance (Teams)  
Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning  
Ms C Macklin, Head of Service, Primary Education  
Ms F Grant, Head of Service, Secondary Education  
Mr B Porter, Head of Education Resources  
Ms B Brown, Strategic Lead - Developing the Young Workforce  
Ms H Brown, Senior Manager Early Years  
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager  
Ms A Donald, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms M MacDonald, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms B Cairns, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms M Garson, Senior Lead - Employability  
Ms R Christie, Additional Support Needs Officer  
Ms Y Ross, CLD Lead Officer  
Mr I Adamson, Head Teacher, Kingussie High School  
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)

Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families (Third Sector)  
Miss J Maclennan, Principal Administrator  
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator  
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Dr M Foxley, Chair of RICM College Merger Partnership Board  
Ms L Rohmer, Principal and Chief Executive, UHI West Highland, and Principal Designate for merged college  
Ms F Grant, Director of Academic Affairs, UHI West Highland, and Curriculum Lead for merged college  
Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland  
Ms F Richardson, Community Learning and Development Support Officer, High Life Highland  
Pupils from Kingussie High School

**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**

The Chair welcomed the Youth Convener for 2022-2023, Caitlyn Munro, to her first meeting of the Committee and invited her to introduce herself.

Ms Munro thanked everyone who had made her feel welcome and supported her in her role so far. In terms of her background, she had worked as Assistant Youth Worker and had recently graduated from UHI with a degree in Child and Youth Studies. She was also a sports coach with Tain Active Schools and an Assistant Cub Scout Leader. She had worked with many groups of young people on different projects, all of which had given her the confidence to fulfil the role of Youth Convener.

Her priorities for the year ahead were mental health and youth participation whilst promoting the Youth Convener role and the Highland Youth Parliament. As it was now possible to meet face to face, she had decided to do a roadshow as a way of rebuilding contact with young people and providing an opportunity to speak with them about mental health in their area and what activities were available for them. So far, she had visited Fortrose Academy and it had been great to talk to the young people and hear about the amazing projects they did, including intergenerational projects, and the positive impact the local rowing club had had on the community's mental health. She was looking forward to visiting more schools and youth groups to meet young people.

She also provided an update on the Highland Children and Young People's charter, explaining that it was now in draft form and she was showing it to the groups of young people she met to get their thoughts on it and ensure it reflected what they wanted. The design still needed some work and it was hoped to link in with the UHI graphic design students to help with this. So far, the response had been really positive and she looked forward to progressing the charter towards a final version.

The Chair thanked Ms Munro for her introduction and was sure Members would be keen to engage with her.

## **Business**

### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Gregg and Ms M MacCallum.

### **2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 7: Mr A Christie

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

The Chair explained that Members had already been emailed a digital presentation summarising recent successes from Highland schools, early learning and childcare (ELC) centres, colleges and third sector partners, and he was sure it would be agreed there was again a lot to celebrate. The presentation was then shown for public record.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

### **4. Consultation on the proposed merger of UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland Co-chomhairle mun mholadh UHI na Gàidhealtachd a Tuath, UHI Innse Gall agus UHI na Gàidhealtachd an Iar a thoirt còmhla**

The Chair stated that, as Members were aware, UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland colleges had agreed to merge to form a single new organisation. It had been hoped to hear about the consultation process surrounding the merger at the previous Committee but, because the date had changed following the death of the Queen, those presenting had been unable to attend. Things had now moved on following the agreement to merge but it was still important to hear from the speakers as originally intended and he welcomed Dr Michael Foxley, Chair of RICM College Merger Partnership Board, Lydia Rohmer, Principal and Chief Executive, UHI West Highland and Principal Designate for merged college, and Fiona Grant, Director of Academic Affairs, UHI West Highland and Curriculum Lead for merged college, to the Committee.

The UHI college merger representatives then gave a presentation on the plans to merge three colleges with 19 rural and island campuses and learning centres across the Highlands, Skye and Western Islands, supporting 9000 students and 600 staff.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Council had written in support of the creation of a Gaelic task force, and disappointment was expressed regarding the stance taken by Bòrd na Gàidhlig at a recent meeting of the Gaelic Committee; and

- concerns were raised around the issue of renewable energy and that powers to make decisions were being taken away from local planning authorities; and
- thanks were expressed for the presentation and Members wished the UHI representatives every success with the new merged college.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

#### **4a. Update on Early Learning and Childcare PVI Partner Rate Engagement since Full Council on 27 October 2022**

##### **Cunntas às Ùr mu Chom-pàirteachas Reata Chom-pàirtichean Prìobhaideach, Saor-thoileach is Neo-eisimeileach Thràth-ionnsachaidh is Cùraim-chloinne on Làr Chomhairle air 27 Dàmhair 2022**

The Chair explained that, following the decision by the Full Council in October to agree a £365k uplift in ELC partner centre rates until the end of the financial year as well as an additional £98,000 to support meals provision, it had been agreed that an update would be provided to the Education Committee on progress with ELC redesign and what engagement had taken place since 27 October. He reminded Members that partner rates would continue to be part of the ongoing budget-setting process that would be considered by Full Council and were therefore not for discussion by the Education Committee.

The Head of Resources then provided a verbal update explaining that, since the Full Council meeting on 27 October, the Council had written to all ELC providers confirming the arrangements for payment of the additional funding support agreed by the Council; received correspondence back, including confirmation of their acceptance of the funding offered; and further written to all ELC providers to confirm the additional funding support in the current financial year, as follows:-

- one-off support funding for ELC partners in the current financial year based on the payment of an additional funding amount calculated as 32p per hour for 3-5 year old provision and 53p per hour for 2 year old provision;
- for the additional ELC payment to apply from August 2022 at a cost of £365,000; and
- an additional 30% uplift backdated from August would be provided until the end of the financial year with regard to meals provision at a total additional cost to the Council of £98,000.

Within that letter, the following Council decisions made on 27 October had also been re-stated:-

- to conclude the current review of ELC partner rate funding for August 2022;
- that recommendations would be considered by the Council in March 2023 relating to ELC funding for 2023/24; and
- that a review of ELC redesign be taken forward, with further updates to the Education Committee.

The Council had also issued an invite to ELC providers to a meeting with officers next week to progress discussions on ELC redesign.

At this stage, Ms H Crawford, seconded by Mr R Gale, **MOVED** that, given the importance of Early Learning and Childcare intervention and services across Highland

and the vital role that this played in fostering onward attainment for children in Highland, the Education Committee recommend the establishment of an Early Learning and Childcare Partner Board. The Board would be made up of 8 Elected Members as per the formula for political balance, with 5 representatives of the Early Learning and Childcare Partner Sector, as proposed by that sector, invited to attend as consultees.

She went on to comment that ELC partners provided childcare for 1760 children in Highland and Members were increasingly aware of the importance of partner provision. It was very much about enabling working parents who relied on the service to continue being economically active, as well as early intervention. She had had the opportunity to visit an ELC centre and had been impressed by the level of professionalism, particularly in relation to Additional Support Needs. The proposed Motion was timely in terms of coming out of the Covid pandemic and the need to ensure the ELC sector was strong and that Councillors had a strategic overview of what was happening.

The Chair thanked Ms Crawford for her Motion. However, he could not support it and he questioned the need for an ELC Partner Board when ELC was already a prominent item with regular reports to the Education Committee and Full Council. The delivery of ELC in Highland was across Council settings, PVI providers and childminders. He agreed that ELC played a vital role in fostering onward attainment for children in Highland. However, he disagreed that the Committee should be creating silos in relation to ELC by seeking to focus only on partner delivery or separating ELC from other parts of education delivery and attainment through the proposed Board.

It was essential to continue to focus on outcomes for all young people, not only those in partner centre provision, and to have an integrated and holistic approach to supporting youngsters in all ELC settings. There was no clarity, in the proposed Motion, on the purpose of the Partner board and what outcomes were expected and he therefore felt strongly there was no justification for such a Board to be established. He had recently discussed with Administration Members the important distinction between the role of Members and the operational role of officers regarding education delivery and, clearly, discussions with providers in relation to the redesign, commissioning and delivery of services were operational.

Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr D Millar, then moved, as an **AMENDMENT**, that the Committee should reject the setting up of a cross party Early Learning and Childcare Partner Board and, in terms of engagement with ELC partners, Members would now step back from this process and allow officers the space and time to lead engagement in these operational matters in relation to the decisions made by the Council on 27 October.

During further discussion, the following comments were made:-

- in response to the Chair's comments, it was suggested that the current arrangement was siloed and that creating the proposed Partner Board was what would break the silo;
- discussions took place in this Committee and at the Council regarding private childcare provision yet there was no formal mechanism for Members to engage with partner providers to find out what the issues were and what they needed to deliver the best care for children in Highland. The Chair reiterated that ELC provision was across all ELC settings, whether local authority, private or childminders, and

confirmed that a presentation or paper about private providers could be brought to Committee if Members so wished;

- the Administration had previously proposed the creation of a Climate Change Committee with the remit to be decided at a later date, and it was therefore questioned why that was not acceptable in this instance;
- in the past, there had been miscommunication and misunderstanding, and establishing the proposed Board, even on a temporary basis, would provide clarity in terms of how the Council engaged with partner providers;
- the Education Committee was the appropriate place to make decisions about ELC provision, and support was expressed for the Amendment;
- what the Motion proposed was to look strategically at how ELC was provided across Highland. There was not time to discuss it in detail at the Education Committee, and groups had been created in the past to look at specific matters. Members knew there had to be transformation in the way services were delivered to families with young children, and how important ELC provision was to families. It was necessary to establish a group of Members that had time to look at the matter in depth, in conjunction with partners and consultees, and consider what sort of services the Council wanted to deliver, what sort of experiences it wanted children to have, how to improve the situation in respect of the cost of living crisis etc, and help inform decision-making at the Education Committee going forward.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 7 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 14 votes, with 1 abstention. The **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr A Jarvie, Mr P Logue and Mr R Gale

**For the Amendment:**

Ms S Atkin, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Ms L Kraft, Mr D Millar, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Reid, Ms S Lamont, Mr I MacDonald and Mr W Skene

**Abstention:**

Ms C Munro

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update; and
- ii. **AGREED** to reject the setting up of a cross party Early Learning and Childcare Partner Board and, in terms of engagement with ELC partners, Members would now step back from this process and allow officers the space and time to lead engagement in these operational matters in relation to the decisions made by Council on 27th October 2022.

**5. Presentation: High Level Attainment Messages and Next Steps**

**Taisbeanadh: Teachdaireachdan agus Ath Cheumannan a thaobh Buileachadh Àrd-Ìre**

The Chair explained that this and the following item, which were about secondary school attainment, were intrinsically linked. It was hoped that the presentation would put attainment generally and the report on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework into perspective and put into context the positive journey schools in Highland were currently on.

He hoped the presentation would also help Members to appreciate the breadth of curriculum on offer and provide an opportunity for the Service to highlight some of the high-level messages on the performance of students in attaining Scottish Credit Qualifications. The journey of improvement showed some significant increased attainment, particularly in increasing grade A awards, and the positive progress made in narrowing the attainment gap.

He then handed over to Ms B Brown, Strategic Lead - Developing the Young Workforce, who gave a detailed presentation as described.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**6. Highland Scottish Credit & Qualification Framework (SCQF) Attainment and Scrutiny (Session 2021-22)**  
**Sgrùdadh agus Buileachadh Frèam-obrach Creideasan agus Teisteanasan na Alba airson na Gàidhealtachd (Seisean 2021-22)**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/16/22 dated 25 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the in-depth, positive and honest report and the preceding presentation, as well as to all the staff who had worked so hard to keep education going during the Covid pandemic;
- given that the graphs showed that Highland was still slightly below the national average, information was sought, and provided, as to how schools were being challenged to improve attainment;
- the increase in the number of young people undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships and the breadth and depth of apprenticeships being offered were welcomed;
- it was important to recognise the scope of young people's abilities and aspirations and to support and provide opportunities to every young person, and the presentation had grasped that;
- the reference to pastoral care was welcomed;
- it was essential to continue to work collaboratively with industry and businesses;
- information was sought, and provided, on the Virtual Academy, particularly in terms of capturing and supporting young learners who had fallen through the system;
- care experienced young people had strong and able voices, and the sterling work taking place in communities to empower them was commended;
- in relation to measuring success in small schools, as stated in the report, it was important to look at trends over time as there could be large fluctuations in year-on-year percentages due to the size of the cohort;
- it was more difficult to have a flexible timetable and broaden the curriculum in small rural schools, and the Virtual Academy was one of the potential solutions in that regard;

- whilst there was no disputing attainment in Highland was increasing it was also increasing nationally and it was necessary to focus on closing the gap;
- the data in the report did not paint a clear picture of how things were progressing;
- it was necessary to ask how the Committee could support schools to improve attainment and what policies were going to change to have a positive impact – eg tackling classroom capacity, increasing the teacher to pupil ratio and providing fair pay for teachers working extra hours to run study clubs;
- until there was a process of going out to schools, gathering feedback as to what they needed to improve, and making changes in the Council Chamber, attainment would not improve against the national picture. In response, the Chair stated that the report and presentation had clearly articulated what was happening to improve attainment, what the plans were in terms of engagement and support, and the stretch aims to challenge schools to improve. He added that improving attainment was not always a matter of resource but of pedagogy, ethos, support and Continuing Professional Development;
- the S4 cohort in the report had been the most impacted by the pandemic and had shown real resilience;
- high attaining pupils often knew their pathway but for others it was not as straightforward;
- it was good to see Foundation Apprenticeships at levels 4 and 5, and it was queried whether this multi-level approach was going to be expanded into S5;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether individual schools that were above the virtual comparator would be working with schools that were struggling to increase their attainment;
- it was good to hear examples of where there had been success;
- it was necessary to ask the fundamental question why Highland was trailing behind the national average and, more concerningly, the virtual comparator, and what was the step change that was needed to turn that around;
- it having been questioned what was being done at area level in terms of providing support to teaching staff, the Chair confirmed that attainment papers would be taken to Area Committees;
- it would have been helpful to see something about early screening for dyslexia and dyspraxia, and to provide more detail in terms of actions and next steps. The Chair reminded Members that the draft Service Plan, which provided details of the actions in place, had been presented to the previous meeting of the Committee;
- congratulations were expressed to all concerned for the steady improvement that was evident in the report;
- it having been questioned whether the stretch aims went far enough to bring Highland into line with the national figures, the Chair responded that targets needed to be challenging but also realistic;
- whilst there had been a marked improvement in attainment in S4, the same gains had not been made in S5 and S6 and it was queried what specific action was being taken in that regard;
- the Foundation Apprenticeships with the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) and Inverness Kart Raceway had produced amazing outcomes and were a great way to engage young people for whom university might not be the way forward;
- information was sought as to how to stretch those who were most disadvantaged whilst ensuring that mainstream pupils were not adversely impacted, and how to ensure that the brightest and best students were being stretched to their full potential;



- the Chief Executive, CALA, welcomed the support for Foundation Apprenticeships and spoke to the enthusiasm, new ideas and thirst for knowledge of the apprentices taken on by CALA, and the invaluable life skills apprenticeships provided. As an employer, apprenticeships were a fantastic pathway, and there were many other employers willing to provide opportunities. It was suggested it was necessary to go into schools at an earlier stage to talk to pupil about the opportunities available and the qualifications they would need. She added that it would be useful to have a discussion about how the Third Sector could help to support the widening of opportunities for young people; and
- it would be helpful to have a seminar or workshop looking at what was happening in the highest performing local authority areas and what it would take for Highland to become number one nationally and provide the best educational facilities, opportunities and experiences in Scotland. The Chair confirmed this a workshop could be provided.

The Chair having thanked Members for their supportive and challenging contributions, the Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** Highland's Senior Phase SCQF Attainment for session 2021/22 and specifically **NOTED** the improvement in S4 attainment;
- ii. **NOTED** that secondary school-based attainment meetings would take place in November and December 2022 and actions for improvement would be agreed. At these meetings stretch targets for session 2022/23 would be set with each school;
- iii. **NOTED** that the Raising Attainment Action plan agreed at the September 2022 Education Committee would be used as a key driver to progress the attainment agenda in secondary schools and reduce the attainment gap; and
- iv. **AGREED** that a Members' seminar/workshop take place on attainment, particularly looking at what was happening in the highest performing local authority areas and what it would take for Highland to become number one nationally.

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider item 8 at this stage.

## **8. Presentation: Kingussie High School – Supporting Our Families from Ukraine** **Taisbeanadh: Àrd-Sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh – A' Toirt Taic dha na Teaghlachan Againn o Ùcrain**

The Chair introduced what was an important presentation about supporting families from Ukraine. As many Members were aware, in spring this year the Council had received the first Ukrainian refugees as part of the "Homes for Ukraine" resettlement programme. There had been little time to prepare for the arrival of the refugees but, as was always the case, schools, staff and communities had stepped up to the mark to support them and make them feel welcome.

He then handed over to Ms R Christie, Additional Support Needs Officer, who spoke to the long history of supporting refugees in Highland and the response to the Homes for Ukraine initiative, highlighting that there were currently 142 young people from Ukraine enrolled in Highland schools. Thirty of those were in Kingussie High School and Mr I Adamson, Head Teacher, outlined the steps that had been taken to make the transition into the school easier, including reaching out to meet families, gifting school uniforms and supplies, using Ukrainian signage and phrases and arranging social events, details of which were provided.

Two S4 pupils, Kateryna Kedyk and Valeria Mulear, then shared their experiences of school life and the support which had been given to pupils and their families from Ukraine since joining the local community in Kingussie.

Members commended the young people for addressing the Committee in a language that was not their first language and emphasised how important it was that they felt welcome and how much local people were learning from them. Congratulations were also expressed to the school, area staff and the community for all they had done.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

**7. Community Learning and Development (CLD) – Feedback & Update on Highland Cares & My Future, My Success**  
**Ionnsachadh agus Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd – Fios air Ais agus Fios às Ùr mu Chùram na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test and reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/17/22 dated 10 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that the report set out the breadth of activity carried out across the Council directorates and by CLD partners over the past year, including some good news from Education Scotland. He was sure Members would agree it was a very positive paper that showed a real recognition of the challenges many young people were facing and how, by working in partnership across different sectors, support was able to be offered.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the links with UHI and the colleges throughout Highland;
- the report by Education Scotland, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report, highlighted the significant achievements and progress made by the Council and its CLD partners since the visit by HM Inspectors the previous year. The fact that HM Inspectors planned no further visits in connection with the original inspection reflected confidence in the direction being taken, and the progress report and action plan were inspiring;
- it was important not to rely solely on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to identify areas of deprivation as it did not always account for rural deprivation and poverty;
- in relation to the project to increase targeted youth work in East Sutherland, Dingwall and Fort William, grant funding had been just shy of £57k and it was queried whether that level of funding was sustainable across Highland;
- people would not learn well if they did not feel valued in their community. The importance of celebrating all protected characteristics was welcomed and information was sought, and provided, as to how diversity could be better promoted; and

- information was sought, and provided, on the successes that had been achieved as a result of the My Future My Success initiative, and Members who had signed up to be mentors spoke with enthusiasm about the project and encouraged others to get involved.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress, including key achievements, made in year one of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan, Highland Cares and My Future, My Success;
- ii. the priorities and focus for year two of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan, and
- iii. commended the findings from the Education Scotland His Majesty Inspectors' CLD visit to Highland Council. (Appendix 2 of the report).

## **9. Early Years Curriculum and Learning Through Play Curraicealam Tràth-Ìrean agus Ag Ionnsachadh Tro Chluiche**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/18/22 dated 10 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that this item about the pedagogy and value of play within the early years curriculum had come forward following a request at the last Education Committee.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the impact of the pandemic was evident in the graph in the report and showed how much children were learning when they were in nursery. Information was sought, and provided, on the approach being taken and the timescale to get back to an upward trajectory;
- it had been heartening, on a recent school visit, to see that new teachers were so immersed in the approach to play;
- it was necessary to have a benchmark, and Members looked forward to the findings of the data-gathering taking place;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how support for teachers would be delivered in terms of the importance of play;
- a spin-off of the lead agency model for health and social care was that health professionals such as Dieticians, Occupational Therapists, Physiotherapists and Speech and Language Therapists were all working together on early years development;
- the “Words Up” resource was commended;
- play was the foundation of all learning, and it was essential to get it right in the early years and even pre-birth. Play was sometimes seen as simple and not valued but it was complex, and practical examples were provided which demonstrated the importance of quality play;
- in Germany, engineering companies invested in early years as they knew children would be the innovators of the future;
- the importance of active outdoor play was emphasised;
- the Chief Executive, CALA, asked whether it would be possible to include opportunities for play in the “Implications” section of all Council reports. The Chair explained that this was a matter for Full Council and undertook to take it forward. The Principal Educational Psychologist suggested that consideration be given to

including a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment in all future Education Committee reports;

- CALA was having a year of play in 2023 to coincide with an international play conference coming to Glasgow. On the point being raised, the Chair confirmed that the Council would be happy to work with CALA, Community Planning Partners and all stakeholders across the early years sector with a view to having a seminar on play and revitalising the Play Strategy;
- it was incredible how much could be learnt about a child's development by observing them play;
- one of the sources of inequality was that some children did not have access to quality play at home, and information was sought, and provided, as to how it was intended to help and support parents and communities to understand that play did not only happen at school; and
- a lack of access to informal supportive spaces for children and parents, such as toddler groups, during the pandemic had had an impact in terms of learning and language acquisition, and it was necessary to support toddler groups to get back up and running.

The Committee:-

- i. acknowledged and **NOTED** the plans for improvement and recovery and the benefits of play-based pedagogy in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and Early level primary;
- ii. acknowledged and **NOTED** the improvement work taking place in ELC and the ambition for progress across all aspects of ELC provision;
- iii. **NOTED** the direction of travel in early years and ELC practice;
- iv. **AGREED** to support and endorse the ELC Vision recognising the communication and co-production between ELC providers, parents/carers and early years staff across Highland;
- v. **AGREED** to work with the Care and Learning Alliance, Community Planning Partners and all stakeholders across the early years sector with a view to having a seminar on play and revitalising the Play Strategy; and
- vi. **AGREED** that consideration be given to including a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment in all future Education Committee reports.

## 10. Revenue Budget Monitoring – Quarter 2 Forecast for 2022/23

### Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd A-steach – Ro-shealladh Cairteil 2 airson 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No EDU/19/22 dated 31 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair commented that he was pleased that, despite the financial risks Members were all well aware of and the financial challenges ahead, at this stage the forecast was still in line with Quarter 1 and, overall, a slight underspend was projected.

During discussion, it was clarified that the majority of ELC funding came in the form of a ring-fenced grant from the Scottish government which was paid early in the year causing the income in this area to appear high.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the forecast revenue position for Quarter 2 of the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, and
- ii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery as set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

## **11. High Life Highland Progress Report** **Aithisg Adhartais High Life na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/20/22 dated 17 November 2022 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland.

The Chair reminded Members that the last time that High Life Highland had presented to the Education Committee was in November 2021, with the next scheduled report having to be cancelled due to the Highland Council Election in May 2022. He welcomed the Chief Executive of High Life Highland (HLH) who would provide an update about the work that HLH was doing in delivering Services on the Council's behalf given the very difficult circumstances that had arisen during Covid and now the cost of living crisis. The report was in three parts with:- Part one presenting information on the performance of HLH during the operating period to 30 September 2022, including information on HLH's contributions to the Council Corporate Plan 2019-22; Part two providing general updates since the last report to the Committee; and Part three providing information on HLH's innovation and service development during and beyond the pandemic.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the fact that HLH had continued to take on additional services at the request of the Council, with 44 new services and facilities having been added to HLH since it was established in 2011, was to be applauded;
- there was a fear, during the Covid pandemic, that music tuition would be lost but, due to the innovative approach of HLH moving tuition online, there were now pupils more able to take up this opportunity, especially those in rural areas;
- it was questioned how HLH compared to other similar Arms Length External Organisations in terms of percentage of local authority funding. However, given the range of services HLH provided, it was not possible to provide a direct comparison;
- information was sought, and provided, as to what form any reduction in services would take; and
- in response to a request, a picture of the impact wage increases and inflation would have on the organisation was provided.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the information on the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 30 September 2022;
- ii. the general updates provided in section two of the report;
- iii. that HLH continues to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract; and
- iv. HLH's innovation and service development during and beyond the pandemic.

**12. Review of the statutory consultation exercise on the establishment of Gaelic Medium catchment areas for Plockton and Lochcarron Primary Schools**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh dhen eacarsaich cho-chomhairleachaidh reachdail a thaobh sgìrean-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig a stèidheachadh airson Bun-Sgoiltean a' Phluic agus Loch Carrann**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/21/22 dated 1 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, Local Members welcomed the proposals and thanked the Education Officer for his efforts.

- \* The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the creation of Gaelic Medium catchment areas for Plockton Primary School and Lochcarron Primary School on the basis set out at paragraph 1.2 of the report.

**13. Membership of Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**  
**Ballrachd Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail do Thidsearan**

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr A Christie replace Ms S Rawlings on the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

The meeting concluded at 3.05 pm.