

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 10.35 am.

### **Present:**

Ms S Atkin	Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mr A Christie	Ms L Johnston
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Kraft
Ms H Crawford	Mr P Logue (remote)
Ms S Fanet	Ms M MacCallum (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr J Grafton	Mrs P Munro (remote)
Mr D Gregg	Mrs M Reid

### **Religious Representatives:**

Ms S Lamont  
Mr I MacDonald (remote)  
Mr W Skene

### **Youth Convener:**

Ms C Munro

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

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Ms T Collier (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr W Mackay (remote)	Mr C Munro (remote)
Mr G MacKenzie (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)
Mr A MacKintosh	

### **In attendance:**

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 Donald, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager  
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer  
Mr S Callander, Head Teacher, Drakies Primary School  
Ms F Henstridge, Teacher, Drakies Primary School  
Ms J MacRae, Head Teacher, Muirtown Primary School  
Ms B Fuller, Principal Teacher, Muirtown Primary School  
Ms F MacNab, Depute Head Teacher, Portree High School  
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)  
Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families (Third Sector)

Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Miss M Murray, Senior Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Pupils from Muirtown Primary School  
Pupils from Portree 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**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 11: Mrs M Reid

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 6: Ms L Kraft and Mr D Millar

Item 9: Mr C Munro

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

The Chair highlighted that a presentation on Outstanding Achievements had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. Given the very full agenda, it was not intended to show the presentation at the Committee. However, the Head of Service, Primary Education, summarised the schools featured as follows:-

Aviemore Primary School  
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School  
Poolewe Primary School  
Strathconon Primary School  
Ullapool Primary School  
Ardnamurchan High School  
Culloden Academy  
Glenurquhart High School  
Inverness Royal Academy  
Thurso High School  
Airport House in Wick  
St Clement's School

St Duthus School

Thanks were expressed to all the children and young people and staff for their contributions, and to the Digital Team for producing the presentation.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 4 and 5 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

The report on Improving Outcomes for Children and Young people brought positive news and showed the improvements that had been made in attainment over the last year as well as where the Council was in terms of its Journey to Excellence. As previously requested by Members, it also provided clarity in terms of what was being done to improve attainment and the engagement taking place with schools, Head Teachers and class teachers.

The presentation at item 5 built on the report and essentially showed policy in action in a school setting and what was currently happening following on from the Attainment Summits that had been held with Head Teachers as well as the work being carried out by Collaborative Leads working with Head Teachers and school staff.

#### **4. Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People A' Leasachadh Bhuilean do Chloinn is do Dhaoine Òga**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/1/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

#### **5. Presentation: Primary Attainment Taisbeanadh: Buileachadh Bun-sgoile**

Mr S Callander, Head Teacher, and Ms F Henstridge, Teacher, Drakies Primary School, gave a presentation on their Journey to Excellence using a shared data culture.

Discussion then took place on items 4 and 5, during which the following issues were raised:-

- the clear report and informative presentation were welcomed, and thanks were expressed to all staff involved for the hard work they had put into improving attainment in Highland. However, it was recognised that there was still a long way to go and there would always be room for improvement;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how outcomes were being measured to ensure there was continuous improvement and robust self-evaluation taking place in all schools, what feedback had been received following recent Attainment Summits and whether there was a collaborative system in place to allow Head Teachers and class teachers to support each other;
- it was good to see that the data being gathered was actively being used;
- the marked improvement in attainment, with Highland being the second most improved authority for P1, P4 and P7 literacy, was welcomed;
- it was questioned whether the significant increase in attainment was down to better marking and moderation or was a true increase in performance;
- the report referred to the intention to host an Education Summit in April 2023, and it was queried whether this was something Elected Members could be part of as it

could be an opportunity to help them understand the pressures in the education system and inform support for change. The Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, confirmed that an invitation to attend, either in person or via live streaming, would be extended to Education Committee Members;

- in relation to recording factors in pupils' lives that affected attainment, it was queried whether this included young carers. Many primary and secondary pupils were young carers, which had an impact on their home lives and therefore their ability to learn;
- an adaptive approach and putting the young person at the centre, with play being a key element, was important;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the stretch aim statistics in Appendix 2 of the report, the stretch aims for 2023/24 and when baseline measures in respect of wellbeing stretch aims would be confirmed;
- use of data by class teachers had been identified in school inspections as an area for development, and it was queried what was being learned, and applied across Highland, from best practice at Drakies Primary School;
- there was a huge amount of focus on improving attainment, which was fantastic to see. However, it was questioned whether it was sustainable, and the importance of not over-stressing class teachers was emphasised;
- whilst the improvements that had been made were to be acknowledged and celebrated, there was still a long way to go on the attainment journey and it was necessary to accelerate. Highland was still in the lower quartile and below the Scottish average, and the true gap was greater than indicated as Highland was pulling down the Scottish average;
- in some ways it was easier for Highland to improve than it was for those local authorities at the top of the attainment tables;
- the report highlighted that assessment and moderation remained a weakness and did not represent the true attainment of primary children, and it was questioned what assurance could be provided to Members in terms of the measures being put in place in that regard. The Chair explained that having a consistent approach to assessment and moderation formed part of what the Collaborative Leads were doing in terms of their engagement with schools, and this would make achieving the stretch aims much easier;
- many young people had to go to university outwith Highland as the courses they wanted to do were not available locally. There was evidence that people tended to stay where they graduated and, to encourage young people to stay in Highland, it was necessary to look at the whole education offering from primary to tertiary. In that regard, it was suggested it would be helpful to have a discussion, at a future meeting of the Committee or a Members' workshop, with UHI regarding further and higher education provision. The Chair confirmed that this could be taken forward;
- it was to be applauded that the biggest improvement had been in listening and talking and that Highland was above the national average in that regard. It was added that listening and talking were essential for the development of numeracy and the health and wellbeing of children, and Members had no doubt that further improvements would follow;
- it was questioned to what extent the 10% improvement in literacy was attributable to how assessment was now carried out, as that would inform how likely it was that the stretch aims would be achieved next year;
- Highland was more or less average in terms of areas of deprivation when compared to other local authorities yet trailed below average in literacy and numeracy, and it was questioned what other Councils were doing that Highland was not;

- the reference in the report to a curriculum rich in literacy and numeracy was welcomed, and it would be helpful to have a Members' workshop on what that looked like in practical terms. The Chair confirmed that could be arranged;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether data was available on how much learning was lost each day/week due to teachers having to deal with behavioural issues in the classroom;
- tribute was paid to Speech and Language Therapists who had worked hard and collaboratively over the last few years embedding linguistic development and language acquisition into the early years curriculum;
- the recognition of the role of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in attainment was welcomed;
- children in Highland went to a wide range of ELC settings, not just Council provision, and it was important to ensure strong links with all ELC providers in terms of transitioning to P1 so all children had the same access; and
- the Chair commented that having school staff in the Chamber to bring the report to life had been important, and that would be his intention for future papers on attainment.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level data in reading, writing, listening and talking, literacy and numeracy for session 2021/22;
- NOTED** that the significant accelerated rate of progress had closed the gap with the national average;
- NOTED** that Highland was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most improved local authority for P1, P4, P7 literacy (10% increase) and numeracy (9% increase);
- NOTED** that Highland was one of only 3 local authorities to have improved literacy by 10% or more and one of only 6 local authorities to have improved numeracy by 5% or more;
- NOTED** that primary attainment meetings would take place from February 2023 and targets for improvement would be agreed with all Headteachers and thereafter scrutinised on a regular basis;
- NOTED** that the Raising Attainment Action Plan agreed at the September 2022 Education Committee would be the key driver to maintaining these accelerated rates of progress, improving attainment and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap;
- AGREED** that consideration be given to a discussion, at a future meeting of the Committee or a Members' workshop, with UHI regarding further and higher education provision;
- AGREED** that a Members' workshop on what a curriculum rich in literacy and numeracy looked like in practical terms be arranged; and
- NOTED** the presentation in respect of item 5.

## 6. Supporting Learners A' Toirt Taic do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

**Transparency Statements:** The undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test and reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider they had an interest to declare:-

**Ms L Kraft – on the basis that she had previously worked as a Speech and Language Therapist alongside ASN in schools and been involved in some of the improvement plans**

**Mr D Millar - on the basis that a relative was a Pupil Support Assistant**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/2/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that, as those who were Councillors during the previous Council term would know, a review of Support for Learning and a journey of redesign and improvement had been ongoing for some time. This obviously continued, with engagement regularly happening with schools, Head Teachers and other key stakeholders to ensure clarity, consistency and equity prevailed across the main elements associated with the delivery and resourcing of Support for Learning. Today's report gave the latest update and provided a strategic direction of travel, and further update would come to the Committee as matters evolved in the future.

During a summary of the report, the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, emphasised that there were no plans to reduce current staffing levels in schools. In relation to recommendation iii, the principles of distribution which had been benchmarked and discussed with Head Teachers were 40% of the school roll, 50% on school clothing and footwear grant, 5% allocated to rurality and 5% allocated to SIMD 1-3. In line with the Scottish Government Head Teacher empowerment agenda and in collaboration with Head Teachers, the proposed changes would put the power back into Head Teachers' hands and the decisions made would be closer to the classroom.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was a massive undertaking to make such fundamental changes, and it was an important report;
- in relation to the proposed algorithm, concern was expressed that not everyone eligible for the clothing and footwear grant applied for it and therefore would not be included, and further information was sought, and provided, in that regard;
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that the top slice referred to in recommendation iii. was an additional sum of money that would be maintained for families that required additional resource that had not been planned for. The enhanced provision funding was separate and, for the coming year, there would be no change to service provision to allow officers to work through the legislation around the presumption of mainstreaming and ensure Highland was in line with national requirements. This did not include Special Schools, which had separate funding streams;
- further information was sought, and provided, as to why there were so many different interventions and provisions to meet the needs of young people and how the new admissions policy would support this need for diversity;
- if, as indicated in the report, 43% of young people in Highland had Additional Support Needs (ASN), the current system was not sustainable, and support was expressed for the principles of change such as more autonomy for Head Teachers and enhancing the role of Pupil Support Assistants;
- recommendation iii. in the report specified two years, and Members would feel more confident if it was a three-year process of change;

- in relation to the proposed algorithm, it was queried whether Head Teachers were confident that the 5% allocations in respect of rurality and SIMD 1-3 would not create huge disparities;
- the need for engagement with parents, pupils with ASN and stakeholders was emphasised;
- stability was key going forward and, with the reassurances provided by officers, support was expressed for the proposals;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the staged intervention approach would work in the Highland context;
- concern was expressed regarding the lack of clarity in the report and that only today were Members hearing the percentages associated with the proposed algorithm. More information was needed before making a decision, including worked examples of what the algorithm would mean for a range of schools. Reference was made to small schools that the algorithm would not pick up yet as much as 50% of their roll had ASN, and it was not clear whether the algorithm would reduce or remove their support;
- the proposals would impact massively on the Council's stated aim of raising attainment;
- further information was sought on the level of consultation that had been carried out with Head Teachers and whether there was majority support from Head Teachers for the proposals;
- the proposals appeared to be a fundamental change based on an algorithm and a sweeping up mechanism for exceptional needs. In relation to the latter, it was queried what the process entailed and how high the benchmark of evidence required was;
- it having been queried whether ASN Teachers were being phased out and replaced with 1 Principal ASN Teacher per Associated School Group (ASG), it was reiterated that there would be no reduction in current staffing levels in schools;
- it was important to get ASN provision right and that Members understood what they were agreeing. More time was needed to get clarification on some of the points raised and, to enable the answers to be provided in detail in a report, it was suggested it was necessary to defer consideration of the matter to a Special Meeting of the Education Committee;
- the report indicated that the percentage of children with ASN in Highland was approximately 10% greater than the percentage nationally, and information was sought as to the reasons for that. In addition, if that was the case, it was questioned whether Highland would ever be able to close the attainment gap;
- the reassurance that there would be no reduction in staffing was welcomed, and it was queried whether staffing levels were now back up to pre-Covid levels;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there would be a significant reduction in bureaucracy as the requirement to produce a large Child's Plan would not be linked to the allocation of resource to schools;
- it would be helpful to see how the proposed algorithm would impact on individual primary and secondary schools. However, it was explained it would not be appropriate to provide that level of detail as it might identify young people with ASN;
- in relation to the statistics in Appendix 2 of the report, it was questioned whether Highland really had double the percentage of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties than Scotland as a whole. If so, a wider discussion was needed in that regard. In addition, it was striking that Highland had more than double the percentage of young carers. Permanently caring for a disabled parent was very

different to other learning needs, and concern was expressed that the impact specific needs might have was not accounted for in the proposals;

- the algorithm would allow a more equitable process of allocation and the new system would enable Head Teachers to use their professional skills to match their ASN allocation to the specific needs of their young learners;
- the national framework on which the proposals were based were about inclusive practice, and Highland had already demonstrated a high level of inclusivity, with children accessing education and learning in the classroom who would previously, and possibly more so in urban areas, have been removed for more targeted support;
- the flexibility that the proposed top slice for specific cases would provide, and the fact the decision lay locally with the Head Teacher, was welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding ongoing collaborative training on the national frameworks that underpinned the proposals and what support was in place to allow Head Teachers to be released to attend multi-agency meetings about children in their schools;
- the Council had set out on an ASN journey in the past only to almost reverse its position, so it was important to get the approach right. Support was expressed for a Special Meeting of the Committee if it would help Members reach a consensus;
- in relation to section 6.3 of the report, it was questioned why the Council's Legal Team had been consulted on the legislation surrounding school placement decisions;
- if Highland had a higher percentage of children with ASN than the rest of Scotland, it made sense that the allocation of total education spend in Highland to ASN was one of the highest in the country;
- the issue with algorithms was they created winners and losers, and Members did not know who they were. If, as requested earlier, information could not be provided by individual school it was requested that it be provided by ASG;
- it was surmised that Inverness secondary schools would stand to gain from the proposals;
- with reference to section 8.1 of the report, it was questioned whether support needs had been assessed incorrectly in the past and whether this could be linked to Highland having a higher percentage of children with ASN;
- it was queried what had changed in last few years that detailed Child's Plans were no longer required, and further information was provided in that regard;
- continuous staff training was important given the many challenges children and young people faced in modern society;
- many young people suffered with their mental health as well as physical and learning conditions, and these all had an impact on a child's ability to learn;
- Additional Support for Learners benefited every child in the classroom, not just those with ASN, and the proposals would have a positive impact on children and young people and help to improve attainment across the board;
- Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families, welcomed the report and spoke in detail to the themes emerging from the feedback gathered from families, by Thriving Families, as to how they felt about ASL, explaining that this exercise had been combined with the national discussion on education. There had been 470 responses from parents and the data gathered had been submitted to the Scottish Government prior to Christmas; and
- the importance of listening to officers and Head Teachers, who were the experts, was emphasised. However, it was added that Members had a scrutiny role.

Following discussion, Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr D Millar, **MOVED** the recommendations in the report, subject to substituting “two years” for “three years” in recommendation iii.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Ms H Crawford, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved that recommendations i. and ii. be noted and recommendation iii. be amended to “agree to defer consideration of the strategic approach to Highland Additional Support for Learning staffing structure, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report, to a Special Meeting of the Education Committee and to invite officers to provide further clarity with respect to:-

- the workings of the proposed algorithm, including percentages of importance given to pupil roll, Clothing and Footwear Grants, SIMD 1, 2 and 3 pupils and Rurality.
- worked examples of before and after scenarios with respect to a range of schools.
- a risk assessment with respect to the impact that the algorithm could have on our stated aim of raising attainment.
- worked examples of how the Exceptional Needs Test would be applied and the level of needs required to override the algorithm.
- the level of consultation undertaken with respect to the teaching staff referred to in the Strategy and whether there is majority support for this strategy.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 11 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 7 votes, with 1 abstention. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Ms S Atkin, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Ms L Kraft, Mr D Millar, Mrs M Reid, Mr I MacDonald, Mr W Skene.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr J Grafton, Mr D Gregg, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Ms S Lamont.

**Abstention:**

Ms C Munro

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the most up-to-date information on the identified additional support needs of the children and young people in the Highlands;
- ii. **NOTED** the requirement to review the criteria in place for admissions to special schools and enhanced provisions based in line with new National guidance; and
- iii. **AGREED** the strategic approach to Highland Additional Support for Learning staffing structure, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report, for the next three years. This included top slice for exceptional circumstances, funding for enhanced provisions and an algorithm based on school roll, clothing/footwear grant, SIMD 1-3 and rurality.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 7 and 8 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

He explained that digital technology was a key part of how education was delivered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the report at item 7 provided a comprehensive update on the strategies, plans and actions in place in Highland for Digital Learning. Highland had been at the forefront of deploying digital devices when it commenced its 1:1 Chromebook model. The Council had been fortunate to have those devices in place during the pandemic and continued to develop their use to support learning and teaching in schools.

The presentation at item 8 directly supported the report at item 7 and effectively showed the strategy at work, supporting both teachers and pupils in many different ways.

## **7. Highland Schools Digital Strategy 2023-26 Ro-innleachd Dhidseatach Sgoiltean na Gàidhealtachd 2023-26**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/3/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

## **8. Presentation: Digital Tools Taisbeanadh: Innealan Didseatach**

Ms J MacRae, Head Teacher, Ms B Fuller, Principal Teacher and 2022 National Digital Innovator of the Year, and pupils from Muirtown Primary School gave a presentation on their digital innovation in learning and teaching.

Discussion then took place on items 7 and 8, during which the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the Strategy and the fact it was not overly prescriptive, and commended the pupils from Muirtown Primary School for their clear and confident presentation;
- there were potential risks associated with focussing on Google and Chromebooks – eg Google might change its education provision or the way Chromebooks functioned might change and become incompatible with legislation;
- there was better connectivity in some parts of Highland than in others and information was sought, and provided, as to what provision was in place in that regard;
- the introduction of Chromebooks had levelled the playing field for young people across Highland who would not ordinarily have had access to such technology. They had meant that learning was possible during the pandemic and had made learning more accessible to children with Additional Support Needs, and thanks were expressed to the decision-makers of the past for their foresight;
- in relation to the digital word game that had been demonstrated during the presentation, it was suggested that Muirtown Primary School could lead the way in developing something similar using Scots or Gaelic words; and
- the investment in Read and Write software was welcomed and further information was sought, and provided, as to how much it was helping inclusion in Muirtown Primary School and whether it was going to be implemented and embedded in all schools.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the strategic direction for digital learning and skills in Highland Schools. As new technologies became more accessible, the team aimed to support and engage with schools to enrich the curriculum and learning;
- ii. the progress made to support schools across Highland, recognising how the Highland Schools Digital Strategy would lead to improved outcomes for children and young people;
- iii. the plans to establish a Highland Digital Learning Academy with empowerment, collaboration, and communication as the core principles; and
- iv. the presentation in respect of item 8.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 9 and 10 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

Whilst most Gaelic reports tended to go to the Gaelic Committee, it was important that papers on Gaelic Medium Education (GME) came to the Education Committee, and he welcomed the report being presented today. It clearly showed the successes and challenges of GME in Highland and what needed to be done to support the sustainability of GME across the diverse authority area.

The presentation at item 10 again showed policy in action. Beth Campbell and Eubha Campbell were pupils from Portree High School who had come through GME from Sgoil Araich to the senior phase and had an inspirational story to tell. Their presentation would be in Gaelic and a translation would be available in the Teams chatline as they spoke as well as in paper form.

#### **9. Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education – The Highland Council Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig agus Foghlam Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig – Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro declared a connection to this item on the basis that his wife was a Gaelic Medium Education teacher and he had children in Gaelic Medium Education. 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/4/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

#### **10. Presentation: Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Success Taisbeanadh: Soirbheachas Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig**

In early November 2022, 20 teams from high schools across Scotland had met to compete for the National Loganair Gaelic Schools' Debate. This was an annual event for Gaelic Medium pupils across Scotland and had been hosted in Holyrood.

Ms F MacNab, Depute Head Teacher, Portree High School, introduced the 2022 winners, Beth Campbell and Eubha Campbell, who gave a short presentation on their learning journey including their experiences, the challenges and the benefits of their years in GME, and what it meant to win such a prestigious prize.

Discussion then took place on items 9 and 10, during which the following issues were raised:-

- Gaelic was a matter affecting everyone. It was more than just the language but also about the art, culture and sport in Highland;
- it was proven that bilingualism boosted standards in education;
- the lack of GME teachers was disappointing but the work being undertaken with Sabhal Mor Ostaig to address this was welcomed, especially as the graduates were more likely to remain in Highland. However, this alone was not sufficient to plug the gap and a position statement as to the current position and the proposed measures to recruit more GME teachers was requested;
- attracting GME teachers, and retaining them, was an issue and the Scottish Government had to help in terms of incentives so that probationers were encouraged to come to Highland;
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) had to take action to grow GME teachers. It had been suggested to them that a “task force” be formed but BNG’s response was that they were satisfied at the direction of travel. This apparent lack of urgency was disappointing as GME could not progress with a shortage of qualified teachers. It was therefore suggested that an urgent meeting be held with other stakeholders regarding this issue;
- community engagement was important so that there were pockets of Gaelic speakers;
- Highland needed to be seen as an attractive opportunity for those qualifying as GME probationers, and it was necessary to support and encourage them so that a teaching career in Highland was their first choice;
- it was pleasing to see a report on GME at the Education Committee;
- an idea of the range of subjects available in Gaelic in secondary school was requested, and provided; and
- the uplifting presentation was commended.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report and the provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education across Highland;
- ii. **NOTED** the areas of current and future development; and
- iii. **NOTED** the presentation in respect of item 10.

## 11. Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Redesign

### Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-dhealbhadh Tràth-ionnsachaidh is Cùrainm-chloinne

**Declaration of Interest: Mrs M Reid declared an interest in this item as a commissioned partner of Highland Council and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for the duration of the item.**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/5/23 dated 5 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair reminded Members that the opportunities presented had been co-produced with partners on the back of very welcome positive meetings and engagement between officers and ELC partners that had taken place in the latter part of 2022. He emphasised that the report dealt specifically with the topic of ELC

redesign and any decisions around partner rates were matters for full Council as part of the budget setting process;

- in terms of resource implications it was important that any cuts or changes as a result of redesign were not just felt by partners but by the sector as a whole;
- the Council was committed to look at the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act but it was important to demonstrate in Highland that we were provider neutral;
- it was hoped the collaboration to date would continue into the future;
- it was questioned how to it was possible to gauge how many children would need childcare in the next 2 to 3 years given that ELC did not have catchment areas;
- the report referred to “quick wins” where there was overlap in provision in some localities and clarification was sought, and provided, as to what this meant;
- shared opportunities to collaborate for mixed economies was to be welcomed as the purpose of this process was what was best for families and giving them more choice; and
- the second Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) ELC meeting in December had been less well attended than the first but this might mean that the Council and the PVI Sector were moving forward positively in collaboration and that previous issues had been addressed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work taken forward to date as part of ELC redesign;
- ii. that the work represented a co-production approach with ELC PVI partner representatives, following two meetings with the sector in late 2022;
- iii. the developing ELC redesign opportunities and actions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- iv. that further updates would come back to this Committee.

## **12. Revenue Budget Monitoring and Service Performance Reporting for Quarter 3 Sgrùdadh Buidseit agus Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson Cairteal 3**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/6/23 dated 17 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried why the Education Committee did not receive Capital reports;
- clarification was sought, and provided, that there was no blanket decision not to fill school crossing patrols. This had apparently arisen at Cauldeen Primary School and it was questioned how many other schools had been similarly affected as, given the important interventions such posts had, it was inappropriate they were held as budget savings;
- in relation to the performance measure relating to the monthly monitoring of school attendance the update stated that it was “extending completion date to end of March 2023, to test the policy has appropriate flexibility to fit where required with particular locality demographics” and clarification was sought as to what this meant;
- it was questioned when the new Early Years Management Information System from SEEMIS would “go live”; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Education Service Plan Performance Dashboard captured the Third Sector organisations which the Council commissioned to deliver its services and meet the outcomes for children and young people as it was important this work was recognised and valued.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the forecast revenue position for Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b of the report;
- ii. there were significant risks and uncertainties relating to current financial year forecasts, relating to pay award, inflation and other pressures;
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iv. the performance reporting update for Quarter 3 as set out within the report and Appendix 3 of the report.

**13. Statutory Consultation – Torridon Primary School: Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure**  
**Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Bun-Sgoil Thoirbheartain: Moladh a Dhol air Adhart gu Co-chomhairle Reachdail airson Dùnadh Foirmeil**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/7/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

**14. Statutory Consultation – Struan Primary School: Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure**  
**Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Bun-Sgoil an t-Sruthain: Moladh a Dhol air Adhart gu Co-chomhairle Reachdail airson Dùnadh Foirmeil**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/8/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, Local Members commented that the local community were now generally supportive of the proposal to formally close Struan Primary School and were considering how the building might, in the future, be used as a community asset.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

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

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting and Ordinary Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 22 November 2022 were **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm.