

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 1 June 2023 at 10.35 am.

### **Present:**

Ms S Atkin	Mr J Grafton
Mr M Cameron (substitute)	Mr D Gregg
Mrs I Campbell	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	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mrs P Munro
Mr R Gale (substitute)	Mrs M Reid

### **Religious Representatives (non-voting):**

Ms S Lamont

### **Youth Convener (non-voting):**

Ms C Munro

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

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr A Graham (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr B Lobban (remote)	Mr A Rhind
Mr A MacKintosh (remote)	Ms K Willis (remote)

### **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  
Ms A MacPherson, Interim Head of Resources  
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager (North)  
Mrs F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South)  
Ms B Brown, Senior Lead Manager, Developing the Young Workforce 3-18  
Ms M Garson, Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18  
Ms H MacGillivray, My Future My Success Development Officer  
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)  
Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families (Third Sector)  
Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland  
Ms R Mackenzie, My Future My Success participant  
Mr A Main, My Future My Success participant

**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. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms M MacCallum, Mr D Millar, Mr I MacDonald and Mr W Skene.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Item 6: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Mr J Grafton made a general Transparency Statement on the basis that his partner was a secondary school teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Mr M Cameron made a general Transparency Statement on the basis that his wife was a secondary school teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

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

A presentation on Outstanding Achievements had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. To formally recognise the many achievements since the last Committee and to mark the end of another school session, which was just a month away, the presentation was shown.

The Chair added that, since the presentation had been prepared, he had been made aware of another achievement in that Fiona Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South), was a finalist in the Proud Scotland Awards. Mrs Shearer was one of six finalists for the Education Award which related to the recognition that education was the key to reducing and eradicating all forms of discrimination including homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, bigotry and racism. He wished her every success at the award ceremony in Glasgow the coming weekend.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the children who had taken part in the Baillie Cup earlier in the week were commended and thanks were expressed to all staff involved for their hard work;
- it was highlighted that it was Pride month, and the Council was praised for setting an example by flying the flag. For decades people had worked hard to ensure that Highland was a great, inclusive place to live, and it was important that young people carried on the good work;

- a Millburn Academy pupil, Matthew McCreddie, had been selected to represent Great Britain at the European Down Syndrome Swimming Championships in Italy in September;
- support was expressed for the pupils of Cannich Primary School who had lost many of the trees they had planted with the Forestry Commission as a result of the current wildfire in the area; and
- congratulations were expressed to Kerrie Laird, Head Teacher, Glenurquhart High School, and her staff for achieving a grade of “very good” against every indicator in a recent Education Scotland inspection report. It was a commendable achievement, and it was hoped it could be replicated in all primary schools in Highland.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

#### **4. Collaborative Improvement Framework Frèam Leasachaidh Co-obrachail**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/9/23 dated 20 April 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair thanked those Members who had attended the recent workshop at which detailed information had been provided on the ongoing work to support and challenge 3-18 educational establishments. Information had also been provided on school inspections.

The report built on the presentations and engagement that had taken place at the workshop and, as had been requested previously by Members, clearly articulated what was happening in terms of moving forward continuous improvement as well as setting out consistent expectations and guidelines for all those working in Highland schools and involved in supporting the Education and Learning improvement agenda.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the informative and useful workshop was commended;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that all teaching and officer staff would have access to the dashboard tools referred to in section 4.12 of the report;
- in relation to the stated expectation that all stakeholders would co-construct the priorities in School Improvement Plans, information was sought, and provided, as to how it was intended to meaningfully engage with parents;
- it having been queried whether one Collaborative Lead Officer (CLO) was sufficient to cover all 29 secondary schools in Highland, it was confirmed that officers were looking at appointing another secondary CLO;
- an assurance having been sought that vacant Additional Support Needs (ASN) Manager posts would be filled, it was explained that, in accordance with the staffing structure agreed by the Committee in February 2023, ASN resource would be allocated to Associated School Groups thereby empowering Head Teachers to make decisions in that regard. There would therefore no longer be ASN Managers;
- if the draft Collaborative Improvement Framework (CIF) was for both primary and secondary schools, additional pages were required as section 6 referred only to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and primary schools;
- the draft CIF was a useful document and the layout was commended. However, it could be improved by including how it was going to be evaluated and how it was intended to promote it to parents. In terms of evaluation, the Chair commented that

there could be mention of the universal framework for evaluation as well as the national toolkit “How good is our school?”;

- it was suggested that a preface be added to the draft CIF setting out the purpose of the document, namely, to drive up inspection results, attainment and positive destinations. The Chair welcomed the helpful suggestion;
- the use of terms such as “bespoke” and “forensic analysis” was welcomed;
- it was queried how the CIF was going to be driven forward given the considerable reduction in the Education and Learning budget;
- thanks were expressed to the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, for her responsiveness to Members’ queries;
- it was questioned whether eight CLOs was sufficient to cover the number of schools in Highland. In that regard, the Chair commented that Head Teachers were the leaders of learning and they and their staff were continuously driving improvement;
- information was sought, and provided, on the daily analysis taking place in schools and whether improvements were starting to be seen in terms of literacy and numeracy;
- all learners mattered, and that needed to be embedded in everything the Education and Learning Service did going forward;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the improvement cycles referred to in the CIF, including the frequency at which they took place and who instigated them. In relation to the latter, the need for a bottom-up approach was emphasised;
- many people and groups found it difficult to engage with Council consultations and it was queried what was going to be done to make it easier, particularly for those who might be less likely or have less time to engage;
- the Care Inspectorate Quality Framework was an additional level of inspection in ELC settings, and it was highlighted that inspection requirements could cause stress and anxiety amongst staff;
- the most important thing that could be done for children was to give them a high-quality early start to life; and
- disappointment having been expressed that the Committee’s religious representatives had not been invited to attend the Members’ workshop, the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, apologised for the oversight and confirmed that invitations would be extended to future workshops.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the purpose and principles to support continuous improvement through the draft Collaborative Improvement framework (CIF);
- ii. **NOTED** the planned collaborative engagement in the form of support, challenge and review provided to schools as outlined in the CIF including the agreed universal support given to all schools; and
- iii. **NOTED** that an informative Member workshop had been held prior to Committee to update Members on the progress of the CIF to date, including the support and challenge provided to all schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings through continuous improvement.

**5. Education and Learning Service – Service Performance Reporting for Q4 – 1st January to 31st March 2023**  
**Seirbheis an Fhoghlaim agus an Ionnsachaidh – Aithris Coileanaidh Seirbheis airson C4 – 1 Faoilleach gu 31 Màrt 2023**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/10/23 dated 10 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that all Services were producing Performance Reports and the format was evolving. The report brought together information from the Education and Learning Service Plan and allowed Members the opportunity to offer support and engage in scrutiny.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the clear, easy-to-read report was welcomed, and it was positive that most indicators were on target;
- in relation to complaint response times, information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the difference in performance between the Service and the Council as a whole, both in respect of 5 days frontline resolution and 20 days investigation. With regard to 20 days escalation, it was cause for concern that only a third of complaints were handled correctly, in line with the Council as a whole, and the contributing factors were queried;
- with regard to Freedom of Information (FOI) response times, it was concerning that 37% of FOIs were not being dealt with within the legislative timescale. It was queried what had contributed to the significant reduction in performance, how performance could be improved and what could be done to pre-empt FOI requests, such as releasing data proactively rather than reactively;
- in relation to current areas of slippage, information was sought, and provided, as to what had prevented wider consultation taking place before now on the development of a Learning and Teaching Policy for secondary schools;
- Committee dates for the remainder of the year were not well-placed in terms of looking timeously at quarterly reports and, when looking at dates for 2024, it was necessary to try to synchronise them with the four quarters. The Chair concurred that this was an important point;
- FOIs often spiked before an election, and it would be helpful to carry out a one-off exercise to establish how many FOI requests originated from political party officers;
- in relation to teacher absence, it would be helpful to benchmark against other local authorities as opposed to non-teaching staff within the Council. Similarly, benchmarking complaints against other local authorities would give a better indication of how the Service was performing. The Interim Head of Resources provided national data on teacher absence in 2021/22 and, as previously requested the average age of teaching staff in Highland; and
- it having been commented that it would be helpful to see information on teacher absence at Ward level, the Interim Head of Resources undertook to liaise with the performance team in that regard. However, it was highlighted that it would not be possible to distil the data down to school level as this could lead to individual staff members being identified.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service's performance information.

## **6. Positive Destinations and Key Transitions** **Cinn-uidhe Dheimhinneach agus Prìomh Eadar-ghluasadan**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**  
**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/11/23 dated 11 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair stated that this was an exciting report which showed the work being done to support young people to focus on careers along with more holistic aspects of life, as well as the key transitions involved with moving into positive destinations irrespective of the types of qualifications youngsters had achieved.

Highland did very well in terms of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and supporting young people in many different ways, and the report not only provided information on DYW but highlighted what was happening in terms of employability and mentoring.

Maxine Garson, Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18, gave a presentation in amplification of the report. In addition, two young people, Regan Mackenzie and Allan Main, supported by Heather MacGillivray, My Future My Success (MFMS) Development Officer, spoke to their experiences as participants in the MFMS programme and shared how it had helped prepare them for their future. Councillor Angela MacLean also spoke to her experience as a MFMS mentor.

The Chair encouraged any other Members who were interested in becoming a MFMS mentor to contact the Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18.

During discussion, Members commended Regan and Allan for what they had achieved and for having the confidence to come and speak to the Committee. Both young people responded to questions about their experience of school, what had made the biggest difference and how things had improved. The success of the MFMS programme was welcomed and it was hoped it would continue.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the continuing progress made on our Developing the Young Workforce, employability and mentoring programmes; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the updated draft Developing the Young Workforce strategic implementation plan for 2022-2023, including the key outcomes identified in section 4.1.2 of the report.

**7. Presentation: Youth Convener Term in Office**  
**Taisbeanadh: Teirm Neach-gairm na h-Òigridh san Dreuchd**

The Chair explained that the Youth Convener, Caitlyn Munro, would shortly be coming to the end of her term in office. Caitlyn had had a very busy year and he thanked her for all her hard work. She had visited every corner of the Highlands and had engaged and worked with young people on many fronts whilst also promoting opportunities for young people to have their voices heard.

Caitlyn Munro then gave a presentation on her term in office, during which detailed information was provided on her personal priorities as Highland Youth Convener; the

Youth Convener Roadshow; the Highland Children and Young People's Charter; the Lead to Succeed Conference; the Sutherland Easter Event; the Highland Youth Parliament Education Conference 2023; the use of social media to engage with young people; and organisations and groups she had worked with during her tenure.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members commended the Youth Convener for what she had achieved during her term in office and being a fantastic ambassador for young people in Highland, and wished her well in whatever she went on to do next;
- the Highland Youth Parliament Education Conference on 23 June was an exciting event and Members were encouraged to attend. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that representatives of other public sector organisations such as NHS Highland and UHI had been invited. It having been queried whether improving access to the outdoors, particularly water-based activities, for young people would be discussed, it was explained that it would depend what questions/concerns were raised on the day. However, this was something the Youth Convener was keen to promote. It was added that the issues raised at the conference would drive the following year's youth work; and
- it would be helpful if the Youth Convener could provide some feedback on the concerns young people had raised in respect of vaping and transport.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

## **8. Devolved School Management (DSM) Stiùireadh Sgoiltean Tiomnaichte**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/12/23 dated 11 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that this report presented the latest draft DSM Scheme which a steering group comprising Education Managers, Trade Union representatives and, importantly, Head Teachers, had been working on for some time. The new Scheme covered many areas of responsibility including changes to staffing for secondary schools which Head Teachers had been instrumental in shaping. Other aspects had yet to be finalised and, with the Committee's approval, the steering group would continue its hard work next session.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was explained that the school roll determined the number of primary teachers;
- clarification having been sought in relation to the Capitation Budget Allocation Calculation in Appendix 2 of the DSM Scheme, it was confirmed that "less apportionment of approved savings" referred to historical savings, and officers would look at how that was presented in the Scheme to ensure there was no confusion amongst Head Teachers;
- for the benefit of new Members in particular, further information was sought, and provided, on the DSM Scheme and whether, and to what extent, it was giving Head Teachers more autonomy over local spending;
- attention having drawn to Appendix 1 of the DSM Scheme which indicated that staffing costs in respect of ASN teaching staff and Pupil Support Assistants was an

area of expenditure not devolved to schools, an explanation was provided as to how ASN resource was funded and allocated;

- large primary schools missed out, compared to secondary schools, in terms of clerical and management support, and it was queried whether there was any flexibility in that regard. The Chair emphasised the need to ensure there was clarity in the Scheme as to how administrative staffing was allocated;
- reference was made to a recent situation where it had been unclear who should pay, and the need for clarity in terms of landlord/tenant responsibilities was emphasised. In that regard, the Chair explained that there was an itemised list. In addition, there was a Property Maintenance Officer in each area who covered schools and whom Members could contact if required;
- formulas on their own were quite abstract, and it would be helpful to provide examples of how they applied to schools of different sizes. In addition, it would be useful to highlight what changes had been made;
- the Education and Learning budget was going to be stretched and, given that secondary school teacher numbers were going up, it was questioned where savings were going to be made;
- the current energy budget arrangements were unfair and unequitable, energy bills being much higher in older less efficient school buildings, and this needed to be looked at. The Chair concurred, commenting that it was an issue that needed to be discussed with the Housing and Property Service;
- the table on Primary School Teaching Entitlements in Appendix 4 of the scheme referred to school rolls of 400 and more, and it was queried whether there were any primary schools of that size in Highland; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was a geographical limit in respect of cluster arrangements.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the changes to the staffing formula for secondary schools;
- ii. **AGREED** that the draft DSM Scheme should be formally adopted; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the continuation of the DSM review group in Session 2023-24 to allow further updates to the manual.

## 9. High Life Highland Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais High Life na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No EDU/13/23 dated 15 May 2023 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland (HLH).

The Chair explained that this bi-annual report was one of the few opportunities Members had to hear about HLH and how it was delivering the Council's Public Service Obligations in Leisure, Sport and Culture across the region. In addition to reporting on the Service Delivery Contract and performance against the Council's Corporate Plan, the report provided a short update on the post-pandemic recovery of customer engagements and income from the Highlife membership scheme.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- HLH had become part of the fabric of the Highlands and it was great to see it recovering from the pandemic;



- in relation to Black Isle Leisure Centre, reference was made to the recent open day, and the new equipment and rise in membership were welcomed;
- the Leisure Link Partnership, which allowed HLH members to access leisure facilities in other areas at no extra cost, was welcomed. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that the scheme was informed by a business case and the figures were monitored consistently to ensure value for money;
- different HLH sites had different rules regarding under 16s using the gym, and it was queried whether there was any scope for making the rules more uniform;
- some carers, due to circumstances such as their age or the number of hours they worked, did not qualify for Carers' Allowance, and it was queried whether they could be included in the budget membership plan;
- the work HLH did to support health and wellbeing in local communities was commended, and it was hoped they could be encouraged to do more;
- the increase in the number of customer engagements to pre-pandemic levels and beyond was welcomed but it was recognised it was necessary to close the gap in terms of pay pressure and inflation;
- information was sought, and provided, on the purpose and scope of the review of the Service Delivery Contract with HLH, and the Chair confirmed that the outcome of the review would be reported to Full Council;
- examples were sought, and provided, of recruitment controls and where they had impacted service delivery;
- it was good to see the variety of services being delivered by HLH;
- concern was expressed regarding the reference, in section 6.2 of the report, to a likely reduction in public services, and the potential impact on children's wellbeing in particular;
- it having been queried whether it was possible to provide detailed information on the services being delivered in a specific Ward, the Chief Executive, HLH, confirmed that he was happy to engage with Members at any time and invited them to get in touch with him or one of his officers;
- Members expressed an interest in the intergenerational aspect of the Time to Talk day and undertook to liaise with the Chief Executive, HLH, regarding how HLH was engaging with people of all ages;
- reference was made to increasing incidents of vandalism and the need to get young people off the streets and out of trouble, and it was queried how HLH engaged with young people to encourage them to take up more healthy habits. In addition, getting from one side of Inverness to the other could be challenging for young people, and it was queried whether a breakdown could be provided of what areas of Inverness people who used Inverness Leisure were coming from;
- whilst the services provided by HLH were excellent and contributed to the Council's Corporate Plan, the financial position was worrying, and the report was a missed opportunity to provide more detail on the issues and how it was intended to close the budget gap. In particular, information was sought, and provided, on property rationalisation, and an assurance was sought that, should HLH cease to manage valuable community facilities such as Raigmore Community Centre and Hilton Community Centre, community groups would have first refusal in terms of their future management;
- appreciation was expressed to the Chief Executive, HLH, for his responsiveness to Members' queries;
- reference was made to concerns regarding the increasing cost of school lets and the associated impact on the services HLH provided on school premises, and information was sought, and provided, as to what mitigation had been put in place

to ensure that services continued to be delivered, both in Inverness and remote and rural areas;

- some leisure centres, such as those in Mid Ross, were not open at weekends and on Bank Holidays when families had time together, and the need for equity and a strategic approach to opening hours was emphasised;
- it was questioned why Inverness Museum and Art Gallery was closed on a Sunday; and
- Countryside Rangers were commended for the support they had provided in terms of visitor management in and around Morar and Mallaig.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2023, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Council Corporate Plan as set out in Appendix A of the report;
- ii. the general updates provided in section 2 of the report;
- iii. that HLH continued to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract;
- iv. the success of HLH's work to recover customer numbers despite the challenges of the post-pandemic operating environment; and
- v. that there had been correspondence between the Council Leader and HLH Chair to initiate the Service Delivery Contract Review as outlined in section 7 of the report.

**10. Statutory Consultation – Gaelic Medium Catchments for Bun-sgoil Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall Primary School, Millbank Primary School, Inverness Royal Academy, Dingwall Academy and Nairn Academy**  
**Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail – Sgìrean-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain, Bun-Sgoil Bruach a' Mhuilinn, Acadamaidh Rìoghail Inbhir Nis, Acadamaidh Inbhir Pheofharain agus Acadamaidh Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/14/23 dated 1 May 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.

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

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr P Logue replace Mr A Jarvie on the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

At this stage, the Chair highlighted an item of good news that had just been received. The Young Enterprise Scotland Company Programme Awards had been held in Glasgow the previous evening and Thurso High School had achieved awards for Marketing, Creativity, Innovation, Best Company Report and, most importantly, Scottish Company of the Year. He commended the young people involved who would be representing Scotland at the UK finals the following week.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 pm.