

The Highland Council

Minutes of the **Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT)** held remotely on Tuesday 14 November 2023 at 3.05 pm.

Present:

Representing the Management Side:

Mrs M Cockburn
Mr J Grafton
Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Representing the Teachers' Side:

Mr T Coles (EIS)
Ms J Hume (EIS)
Mr L MacKenzie (EIS)
Ms G Warburton (EIS)

In attendance:

Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
Ms N Grant, Joint Secretary, Management Side/Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning
Ms F Grant, Head of Education, Learning and Teaching
Ms R Bell, Policy Officer
Ms J Sikkema, HR Business Partner
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms S Atkin, Ms H Crawford, Mr D Louden and Mr C Munro.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

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.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 13 June 2023

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 13 June 2023.

4. Work Plan Update 2023-24

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/3/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, made the following comments:-

- in relation to Embedding the Collaborative Improvement Framework (CIF) and Improving Learning and Teaching across the Local Authority, the Teachers' Side looked forward to any interim discussion on the evolution of the CIF before the end of the next school session as, whilst it was an employer's tool, it had a significant impact on teaching staff, and it was emphasised that the resultant framework must be arrived at through discussion involving all and must work for all stakeholders. It was noted that LNCT 16 was to be reviewed but, whilst an initial meeting had taken place in the last session, there had been no further meetings involving unpromoted staff from within the Teachers' Panel. Again, full and open discussion was key, and this would consider all staff and the capacity of individual schools and cover both internal and external visits. The need for schools to have clarity as to the actions of Collaborative Leads was emphasised and attention was drawn to the statement in the report that work to develop a learning and teaching policy would "involve school staff and central officers working closely". This pointed towards not just senior leadership teams within schools but unpromoted and middle leaders within a truly collaborative approach. It was important that any way forward considered individual schools and the resources at their command as it was clear that not all schools would be equipped to progress in the same manner if their needs or next steps were identified as equivalent. Moving forward, it was necessary to manage expectations, particularly when considering increased levels of needs within classes with a decrease of resources;
- in relation to LNCT 4 Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, the view of the Teachers' Side was that going forward there should be two separate agreements rather than a combined agreement covering both disciplinary and grievance procedures. Whilst the Council's updated corporate Disciplinary Policy was awaited, no issues were anticipated in that regard. However, in relation to the grievance procedure, there had been some further discussion following the review period and, given there was an SNCT framework which referred to an appeal stage to Elected Members, the Teachers' Side had asked that this facility remain in place. This had been discussed with HR who saw no issue given that it was used so infrequently and an Appeals Committee existed currently within the disciplinary procedure;
- in relation to LNCT 27 Recognition and Procedure Agreement (Revised), this had been reviewed previously and replaced by LNCT 1. It was questioned why LNCT 27 had not been deleted at that time and suggested that, in future, where any agreement was reviewed and renumbered, deletion of the previous version should take place automatically upon approval of the reviewed version;
- in relation to job-sizing, there had been some initial discussion that had taken into consideration existing practice and some updated guidance from the SNCT. The Teachers' Side was of the view that job-sizing every post would appear to create additional workload and delay and, as such, sought further discussion regarding situations that would negate the need for a full and formal job-sizing - eg where the newly vacant post was less than 23 months old, sat under the same Head Teacher who carried out the initial job-sizing and had had no changes in remit. However, if there was a national directive that every post be job-sized, as suggested during further discussion, then it would have to be done;
- in relation to LNCT 24 Code of Practice on Use of Temporary Contracts for Teaching Staff, some initial re-wording had taken place at Teachers' Panel level, and this would be shared and discussed with Management Side representatives at a meeting scheduled to take place in December 2023. However, recently a question had been raised regarding the engagement of long-term supply staff and the need for an agreed position on this, and it was suggested it was necessary to consider including this within LNCT 24. Additional background information was

provided, during which it was explained that three days or more was classed as long-term supply.

In response to the comments regarding Embedding the CIF and Improving Learning and Teaching across the Local Authority, the Chair of the Management Side emphasised the importance of the CIF. It was important to ensure that the Council was on an improvement journey, and to take account of where it stood nationally in terms of attainment. Whilst he took on board the points made, there was a shared aspiration to ensure that the best possible learning and teaching was taking place in Highland schools. He categorically felt the central team and the CIF were helping in that regard, and he had received feedback from schools that had been involved in school inspections indicating how supportive the CIF and the Collaborative Leads had been.

The Joint Secretary, Management Side, explained that the CIF, which had been well received by Elected Members at the Education Committee in February 2023, was in draft form at present. She gave a commitment that it would be reviewed and evaluated, and it was intended to present the findings of the evaluation to a future meeting of the Education Committee.

The Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, added that the Teachers' Side welcomed the development of a framework and would welcome the involvement of staff at all levels in the proposed evaluation. Whilst it was acknowledged that there would be positive feedback from some schools, it was also important to recognise that there was feedback that was less positive. Transparency and keeping staff informed and involved in discussions were key.

The Joint Secretary, Management Side, undertook to feed back the points made to the Collaborative Team and confirmed she was happy to share their proposed themes with the Teachers' Side.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position in respect of:
 - a. Embedding the Collaborative Improvement Framework;
 - b. Improving Teaching and Learning across the Local Authority;
 - c. Integrated Children's Service Plan; and
 - d. Review of LNCT Agreements;
- ii. and **APPROVED**:
 - a. LNCT 13 Generic Depute Headteacher Remit; and
 - b. the deletion of LNCT 27 LNCT Recognition & Procedure Agreement (Revised)

The meeting concluded at 3.20 pm.