

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 4 September 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr I Brown
Mrs I Campbell
Ms S Fanet
Mr J Grafton
Mr P Logue

Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr C Munro
Mrs M Paterson (remote)
Mr R Stewart

In attendance:

Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Mr R MacKay, Development Officer, Education and Learning
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Translation Officer
Dr T Stones, Senior Lead Manager, Professional Learning and Development
Ms C Macklin, Head of Education, Lifelong Learning and Gaelic Services
Ms A Stewart, Corporate Performance Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms F Dalgetty, Chief Executive, Fèis Rois

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J McGillivray.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted at the meeting on 27 June 2024 did not require to be used in relation to the Gaelic Committee.

4. Good News

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as presented.

5. Fèis Rois – Presentation

There had been a presentation by Fiona Dalgetty, Chief Executive of Fèis Rois.

Ms Dalgetty provided an overview and background of the organisation, including their partnerships, funding and opportunities offered to children and young people.

During discussion, Members commended the work of the organisation and were pleased to hear that Fèis Rois continued to reach internationally. In response to a question about the future, Ms Dalgetty stated that she remained hopeful and she provided examples of activities that had been remodelled to suit the times.

The Committee recognised the positive impact on health and wellbeing of children and young people in the area and hoped for their continued success.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Progress Against Gaelic Language Plan 4

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

The Gaelic Policy Officer provided a progress update and stated that current data, and that upcoming, would continue to guide prioritisation and decision making in relation to the outcomes within the Gaelic Language Plan (GLP). Upcoming data would be provided to the Committee as it became available.

Since the last Committee, the layout and style of the GLP within the Performance and Risk Management System (PRMS) had been updated and would now be presented as a briefing booklet, designed to make the information more attractive and accessible.

Members were informed that they could view progress at any time against the GLP by accessing PRMS. Members thanked the Corporate Performance Officer for the step-by-step guide which was presented to the Committee.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the comparison between 2011 and 2022 in terms of page 4 of the report;
- detailed information was sought in terms of identifying a possible location for a 3-18 campus in Inverness and it was confirmed that information in relation to the feasibility study would be shared after an upcoming strategic meeting;
- support given to parents to allow Gaelic speaking at home was welcomed and an example was provided regarding the complexities of bilingual learning. Information was sought, and provided, regarding the dynamics at home and what support could be given to parents to overcome any challenges; and
- it was important to keep the 3-18 campus in context with the rest of the Council's plans. The Highland Investment Plan was focussing on the built school estate and it was asked how the 3-18 campus fitted in with the Highland Investment Plan, in

terms of the feasibility study and the possibility of any other campus, Gaelic or otherwise.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. that the next PRMS report available would also be a transitional report between the current GLP and the refreshed GLP.

7. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Highland led other local authorities in terms of what it did to sustain and promote the Gaelic language and culture but, looking forward, it was important this was maintained. The report before Members showed the hard work taking place in Highland;
- there was an opportunity to consider how data was collected in communities where Gaelic was continuing to ascertain what would work and the cost of sustaining progress;
- it was encouraging to see the number of teachers taking part in the various programmes and regular updates as to how this was progressing would be useful. It was important to support teachers and even if a Head Teacher had only a few words of Gaelic it would encourage pupils to learn Gaelic;
- a follow-up study beyond the school years of those who had gone through Gaelic Education, or who had exposure to Gaelic learning, would be useful to see what contribution was being made to the greater Gaelic world;
- in the equality implications of the report, it was suggested neurodiversity should be taken into account as teaching some children a different language might need a different approach; and
- Oideas, a programme developed by the Highland Council and Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, provided podcasts where professionals working in Gaelic Medium Education had a space to share reflections about their work. The importance of this was acknowledged.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the areas of development and progress in GLP Strategic Priority 4.1; and
- ii. the actions to support the Professional Learning of Gaelic Teachers that support the Statutory Requirements for Gaelic Education.

8. Bilingual Policy Progress Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- there was a degree of caution required when using AI and/or online translation. Technology was advancing but the human element was still required to ensure the right context was being used;

- there were instances where contractors had not used the Council's Gaelic translation service;
- the draft Policy on the Use of Bilingual Traffic Signs, currently being revised by the Roads and Infrastructure Department, proposes that bilingual signs would be used for all new road signs, subject to stated exemptions. The Gaelic Team were currently liaising with colleagues to develop a formal and robust assessment, consultation and approval process regarding such proposed exemptions. This would help to ensure that exemptions to the bilingual policy were only permitted in exceptional circumstances. Members were of the view that Gaelic should be used on all road signs and questioned how a bilingual sign could compromise road safety and how it would incur the need for larger foundations. If only one language was to be used then it should be Gaelic given that it was the indigenous language; and
- it was often contended that the inclusion of Gaelic on road signs cost more but it was well documented that the costs involved were negligible.

The Committee **NOTED** the work that had been undertaken in relation to the bilingual policy refresh and the proposed next steps ahead of its relaunch.

9. Gaelic Conference

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/24 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- Gaelic speakers could suffer from isolation and this reinforced the importance of having access to Gaelic;
- the involvement of minority languages and other cultures in the conference was applauded;
- the conference would showcase Gaelic in action and in a business setting; and
- although the conference would be in-person consideration could be given to either live-streaming or recording it.

The meeting ended at 1.45pm.