



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Stornoway and through Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 4 February 2025 at 11.00am.

PRESENT

Mr Paul Finnegan (Chair)	Mr Iain M Macleod
Mr Mustapha Hocine (Vice-Chair)	Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Paul Steele	Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Kenny M Macleod	Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Kenneth Macleod	Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Calum Maclean	Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Rae Mackenzie	Dr Frances Murray
Mr Finlay M Stewart	Mr Norman MacDonald
Rev Hugh Stewart	Rev Bruce Jardine

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Iain A Macneil	Mr Donald F Crichton
Mr Uisdean Robertson	Mr John A Maciver
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE
Mr Gordon Murray	

APOLOGIES

Father Michael Macdonald	
Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr George Murray

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Iain G Smith
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr Iain Campbell
Ms Mary Clare Ferguson	Ms Anne Macleod
Mr Jack Libby	Mr Colin G Morrison
Ms Evelyn Coull MacLeod	Mr Derek Mackay

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer led by Rev Hugh Stewart.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 24 November 2024	1	The Minute of the Meeting of 24 November 2024 was approved .
Declaration of Interest	2	There were no declarations of interest.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Dileab 2024 – The Leverhulme Projects	3	<p>The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the work in schools across 2024 looking at the life and legacy of Lord Leverhulme. The Report noted that theme of land raiding and the legacy left by Leverhulme was explored and four showcase concerts took place:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stornoway Primary School, An Lanntair, 14 March 2024• Sir E Scott/Leverhulme Memorial, SES School, 27 March 2024
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- Sgoil an Rubha, An Lanntair, 8 May 2024,
- The Nicolson Institute, An Lanntair, 15 May 2024.

All performances were sold out and feedback from these events from both pupils, teachers and the wider community was extremely positive. The Report further noted that in addition to the concerts, these eight schools entered plays into the Local Mod in June 2024. Local writers wrote scripts on the Leverhulme theme, and the Cultural Coordinator provided direction to these schools. The competition saw a record number of entries and clearly demonstrated the enthusiasm and appetite for drama in schools, not only at primary level but also in secondary.

Options to ascertain future themes for Dileab projects are being explored, with a recognition that funding from external sources will be required to progress any projects.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.

Schools IT
Infrastructure Plan
For 2024-28

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With reference to item 11 of the Minute of the Meeting of 20 February 2018, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the challenges in meeting the Comhairle's obligations regarding "enhancing learning and teaching through the use of digital technology" due to reductions in funding allocations for IT infrastructure, equipment and digital devices for schools, and provided an update regarding alternative proposals to maintain and support the provision.

The Report noted that the Schools IT Team had identified a £2.3m capital investment requirement to maintain the schools IT systems across various projects in 2018-2023; a total capital allocation of £900k had been received for this period. The Report indicated that a direct result of this allocation was a reduction to the planned schools IT refurbishment program and only 5 schools receiving an IT refurbishment during the period 2018 – 2022.

The Department have addressed the current critical issues by replacing the outdated and failing switches and Wi-Fi access points in all our schools from CFCR funding created from revenue budget carry forwards. The Department are also now looking at new infrastructure arrangements for the delivery of IT in schools with a more cloud-based approach and lower cost IT hardware, especially in primary schools. Also included in the new approach is the replacement of outdated expensive smartboard technology with more cost-effective multifunction digital screens which is well underway for most schools.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.

Gaelic Secondary
School – Feasibility
Study and
Preliminary
Consultation

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The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided information in relation to the commitment within the Comhairle's Gaelic Plan 2023-2028 to examine the merits of Gaelic standalone schools, and which sought approval to commence a feasibility study and preliminary consultation with stakeholders about the establishment of a Gaelic secondary school in the Western Isles, subject to the successful application for funding from the Scottish Government.

The Report indicated that consideration of the establishment of a dedicated secondary Gaelic school is in line with the strategic priorities identified in the Comhairle's Gaelic Language Plan for 2023-28 in which it states that the Comhairle will continue to examine the merits of standalone Gaelic schools. Such work also aligns strongly with the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy 2022-27 in terms of at least five of the strategic priorities.

The Report noted that Gaelic Medium Education is well established in the Western Isles, especially in the primary sector, with comprehensive provision serving every community across the islands in almost all primary schools.

Analysis indicates that provision is less well embedded, consistent and comprehensive in secondary education, although there is continuing recognition of excellent work in Gaelic education that is happening across our four secondary schools.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the commencement of a feasibility study and preliminary consultation with stakeholders about the establishment of a Gaelic secondary school in the Western Isles, subject to successful application for funding from Scottish Government.

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that exempt information in terms of Paragraph 6, 8 and 9 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely, information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (other than the Comhairle), the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by the Comhairle under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services, and any terms proposed or to be proposed by or to the Comhairle in the course of negotiations for a contract for the acquisition or disposal of property or the supply of goods or services.

Barra And Vatersay
Community
Campus 6

With reference to item 14 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 November 2024, the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project. The Report noted that the delivery team has progressed the options appraisal process in line with the programme. A consultative draft of the Options Appraisal is due for submission on 31 January 2025 and a review and clarification process will immediately follow.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle note the Report.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 18 and 19 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely information relating to the adoption, care, fostering or education of any particular child or relating to the supervision or residence of any particular child in accordance with a supervision requirement made in respect of that child under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968.

Residential
Placements for
Children and Young
People 7

With reference to item 18 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 November 2024 the Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report advising of the position with regard to Specialist Residential Placements for children and young people and of the budgetary implications arising from these placements.

The Report indicated that the inaugural meeting of the Children's Services Member Officer Working Group, which will consider residential care provision, will be held on 11 February 2025.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle note the financial position for specialist residential provision for 2024-25.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports
Outstanding 8

The Chief Executive submitted a Report detailing the Reports Outstanding arising from decisions of the Committee.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.

