



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Stornoway on Tuesday, 29 April 2025 at 10.30am.

PRESENT

Mr Paul A Finnegan (Chair)
Mr Kenneth J Maclean
Mr Paul F Steele
Mr Kenny M Macleod
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Dr Frances Murray
Mr Finlay M Stewart

Mr Mustapha Hocine (Vice-Chair)
Mr Iain M Macleod
Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Angus McCormack
Mr Norman MacDonald
Rev Hugh Stewart

APOLOGIES

Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Rae Mackenzie
Mr George Murray

Father Michael Macdonald
Rev Bruce Jardine
Rev Hugh Ferrier

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Angus Morrison

Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Iain Maclean Macaulay

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr
Mr Donald A Macleod
Ms Mary Clare Ferguson
Mr Jack Libby
Ms Anne Macleod
Mr Derek Mackay

Mr Dan MacPhail
Mr Jordan Carberry
Mr Neil Macleod
Ms Renee Mason
Mr James Mackinnon
Mr Sandy Gomez

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Rev Hugh Stewart.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 1.
4 February 2025

The Minute of the Meeting of 24 November 2024 was **approved**.

Minute of Meeting of 2.
25 February 2025

The Minute of the Meeting of 24 November 2024 was **approved**.

Minute of Children's 3.
Services Member
Officer Working
Group Meeting of 11
February 2025

The Minute of the Meeting of the Minute of Children's Services Member Officer Working Group Meeting of 11 February 2025 was **noted**.

Minute of Local 4.
Negotiating
Committee: Teaching
Staff Meeting of 18
March 2025

The Minute of the Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee: Teaching Staff Meeting of 18 March 2025 was **noted**.

Minute of Barra and Vatersay Project Board Meeting of 26 March 2025	5.	The Minute of the Meeting of the Barra and Vatersay Project Board Meeting of 26 March 2025 was noted .
--	----	---

Declaration Interest	of	6.	There were no declarations on interest.
-------------------------	----	----	---

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Service Plans Operational Registers	Business and Risk	7.	With reference to item 4 of the Minute of Meeting of 23 April 2024 the Chief Executive submitted a Report which sought approval of the Comhairle's Service Business Plans and Operational Risk Registers 2025/26.
--	-------------------------	----	---

The Comhairle approved the five-year Operational Plan and associated Service Business Plans (SBPs) 2022-2027 in February 2022 that were prepared in accordance with the Corporate Strategy 2022-2027. The Corporate Management Team (CMT) approved a new SBP Report format in October 2022 that was designed to provide Members with a more comprehensive and informed picture of each service, including the funding and staffing resources identified to implement each SBP.

The Report stated that from 2024/25, all SBPs are presented to the April Series of Meetings for approval to ensure all sections of the SBPs are as up to date as possible.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the Committee's interests were concerned, that the Comhairle approve the Service Business Plans and Operational Risk Registers 2025/26 appended to the Report.

Business Plans	Continuity	8.	With reference to item 5 of the Minute of Meeting of 23 April 2024, the Chief Executive submitted which provided an update on the status of Business Continuity Management across the Comhairle.
-------------------	------------	----	--

The Report stated that risks that resulted in a disruption to the service required continuity strategies in place to allow service delivery to continue with minimum disruption. Services had been asked to prepare a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for their most critical activities, therefore in the event of an incident that causes disruption, the BCP can be picked up and immediately actioned.

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

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Ross and Cromarty Education Trust Bursaries	9.	With reference to item 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of 18 June 2019, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for the amended award criteria for Ross and Cromarty student and pupil bursaries along with the temporarily reopening applications for payment under Sections 13 to 29 of the Ross and Cromarty Trusts ('fifth schedule').
---	----	--

The criteria for the student and pupil bursary awards agreed by the Comhairle in 2019 were focused on low-income families only and, as a result of these stipulations, the Department have been unable to issue any Ross and Cromarty student bursaries in the previous two years due as there were no applications from eligible students.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

(1) approve the amended student bursary award criteria as detailed in Appendix 1;

- (2) **approve the amended Nicolson Institute pupil bursary award criteria as detailed in Appendix 2 of the Report; and**
- (3) **approve reopening for applications under Sections 13 to 29 of the Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust scheme from April 2025 until the available funding of £5,000 is awarded.**

South Uist Primary
Schools Catchment
Area Rezoning

10. With reference to item 9 of the Minute of the Meeting of 23 April 2025, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the findings of the preliminary consultation about the rezoning of South Uist primary schools and to seek a decision on the next step based on the consultation outcome.

The Report indicated that in February 2024, the Comhairle received a formal request from Sgoil Dhalabroig Parent Council to consider a rezoning of primary school catchment areas in South Uist to better reflect enrolments in the area. Following consideration by the Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee in April 2024, and it was agreed to embark on a preliminary consultation at the informal stage of the statutory process. The Report detailed the findings of the preliminary consultation, together with the options for consideration.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) **note the findings of the preliminary consultation and consider the options detailed at paragraph 6.5 of the Report; and**
- (2) **agree to take no further action and retain the current catchment areas.**

National Thematic
Inspection of
Education Authorities

11. The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of both local and national reporting on a National Thematic Inspection of Scottish education authorities conducted by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education on the theme of 'Local Authority Approaches to School Improvement.'

A written 'Summarised Findings' report was provided to each authority providing specific Local Authority feedback in March 2025 after all thirty-two authorities had been inspected and findings verified. The report for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar identified strengths and good practice across the four scrutiny areas and, whilst it did not make specifically identified recommendations, a number of areas were noted where further improvement should be focused. Findings from the thirty-two inspections were collated into a national report which provided an overview of the current aggregated position across the nation in relation to each of the four scrutiny areas and made seven recommendations that encompass the work of Scottish Government, local authorities and schools.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report and support the Central Education Team in the development of the Action Plan to address development areas, particularly where they relate to strategic governance and elected member engagement.

Stornoway Primary
Sports Development
Update

12. With reference to item 13 of the Minute of the Meeting of 26 November 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed progress on the proposed sports facility at Stornoway Primary. The Report indicated that the Comhairle made a commitment in the 2023-28 Capital programme of £2M for the construction of a new sports facility at Stornoway Primary to increase access to high-quality teaching spaces for PE and sport and to increase dining capacity in the school by reducing the demand on the current assembly hall as a combined dining and PE teaching space.

Over the last three years, the Comhairle has worked to develop a design and explore the market for the construction of a large games hall using a metal frame and tensile fabric skin, which was considered to offer the potential for a larger and more versatile space than the use of traditional construction methods.

The procurement of such a specialist building has been complex and time-consuming but has resulted in identification of a preferred supplier operating internationally that can supply a proprietary aluminium frame and tensile fabric building to meet the project specifications.

A planning application was submitted for the proposed building in September 2024 and was successfully granted in late December. tender documents have been published, with returns due in early May. Subject to the tendering process, it was expected to have contract awards by early summer, with work on-site shortly after. Based on that timescale, it was forecast that the building would be ready for occupancy by early 2026.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report, including the increase in the total project cost which will met from external grant funding.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Promise: 13.
Supportive School
Structure (Right to
Education) Project

With reference to item 9 of the Minute of the Meeting of 26 August 2024, the Chief Officer, Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which provided an update on the the use of Whole Family Wellbeing Fund to allow a continuation of the Supportive School Structure (right to education) project that had been established and funded from The Promise Partnership.

The Report indicated that that the Comhairle had received funding from the Scottish Government, through The Promise Partnership and with Corra Foundation as the delivery partner, in 2023 to deliver innovative interventions with care experienced children and children on the edge of care to improve their attainment and achievement outcomes. The Extended Learning Resource (ELR), The Shed and the Nicolson Institute formed a partnership to identify and support pupils from P7 through to S6 who would benefit from additional support. The Promise funding expired on 31 March 2025 and, given how successful the project has been, the Children's Services Partnership has agreed to redirect Whole Family Wellbeing Funding towards this project to allow it to continue until the end of this academic year beyond the period of the original Promise funding.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note the progress of The Promise Project innovations in the Nicolson Institute, Extended Learning Resource and several feeder primary schools; and**
- (2) support the continuation of the project for the 2025-26 financial year based on the use of external funding streams referenced in the Report.**

Outer Hebrides 14.
Bairns' Hoose (An
Taigh-Sholais) Project

With reference to item 4 of the Minute of the Meeting of 18 June 2024, the Chief Officer, Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed progress with the Outer Hebrides Bairns' Hoose (An Taigh-Sholais) Project. The Report indicated that Bairns' Hoose was a transformational, whole-system approach to delivering child protection, justice, and health support and services to child victims and witnesses of abuse and harm.

The Comhairle was chosen as one of the initial six pathfinder authorities in Scotland following a successful application process. The location of An Taigh-Sholais was fairly unique in terms of the approaches taken by the other five Pathfinders in Scotland, being located in a town centre setting, within the same building space as a library service, the concept had been met very favourably by the Scottish Government and experts in the field, including from Bragi Guðbrandsson, founder of Barnhaus model in Iceland.

In terms of access to provision in Uist and Barra, the Rowantree Centre will be used as a satellite service for An Taigh-Sholais, with the installation of fixed visual recording equipment and improvedfurnishings and décor, meaning children from Uist and Barra will

have less requirement to travel to Stornoway. There may still be some cases where children may need to use of An Taigh–Sholais in Stornoway in terms of gaining 'best evidence'.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the progress made with An Taigh–Sholais and the achievements to-date across the workforce for designing a Bairns' Hoose model that has achieved national and international interest and supported the Comhairle in achieving all 11 Standards.

Continuing Care
Policy and Allowance 15.

The Chief Officer, Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which sought approval to provide a Continuing Care Allowance for carers of young people between the ages of 18 – 21 where they have opted to remain living within the same foster or kinship placement.

The Report indicated that In October 2023, the Scottish Government introduced a Scottish Recommended Allowance in relation to children who are cared for in qualifying foster and kinship care placements. The Scottish Recommended Allowance was the minimum level of allowance which local authorities can pay to support children in foster and kinship care. The Scottish Government has not set a Scottish Recommended Allowance for the maintenance of young adults in continuing care.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree that:

- (1) the payment of a maintenance allowance for young people in continuing care who reach the age of 18 at the rate of £200.00 per week and that the rate will be paid up to the young adult's 21st birthday if they remain in the continuing care placement;**
- (2) the rate of allowance will increase in percentage terms at the same rate at the recommended national foster care allowance; and**
- (3) for young people studying or training and having to live away from their Continuing Care placements, the carers will get a pro rata payment for when the young person returns to their Continuing Care placement (during holidays and visits between holidays), that an additional weeks' payment will be made each academic/training term to carers to use in a way that benefits the young person, and that with prior agreement from social work, young people will have the costs associated with their travel to and from their Continuing Care placement covered.**

PRIVATE ITEMS

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 16 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, namely the amount of any expenditure proposed to be incurred by the partners under any particular contract for the acquisition of property or the supply of goods or services, and item 17 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 5 of Schedule 7A to the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 namely

Barra and Watersay
Community Campus
Update 16. *

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of the Meeting of 4 February 2025, the Chief Executive submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Barra and Watersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project.

The Report detailed the findings of the recently commissioned Developed Study which included a site options appraisal. The Report also noted the operational and political challenges the Project faced and suggested an operational and political strategy for advancing the Project.

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

- (1) notes the advice and professional assessments contained in the Report and the Developed Study; and
- (2) agrees that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Elected Members of the Project Board, implements the operational and political strategies set out in paragraphs 2.3 and 5.7-5.10 of the Report.

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 17 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 8 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

17. * With reference to item 7 of the Minute of the Meeting of 4 February 2025, 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.

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 2025-26.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports Outstanding

18. 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.