



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Stornoway on Tuesday, 17 June 2025 at 10.30am.

PRESENT

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

APOLOGIES

Mr George Murray	Rev Hugh Ferrier
Father Michael Macdonald	

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Iain A. Macneil	Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Donald F. Crichton	Mr John A. Maciver
Mr Iain M. Macaulay	Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Ms Renee Mason
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr Neil Macleod
Ms Mary Clare Ferguson	Mr Dan MacPhail
Mr Iain G Smith	Mr Maxwell Smart
Ms Donna Murray	Ms Anne Macleod
Ms Fiona MacInnes	Ms Patricia Macleod
Mr David Downham	Mr Sandy Gomez
Ms Morag Fletcher	Ms Joanna Morrison
Mr Jordan Carberry	Mr Derek Mackay

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Rev Bruce Jardine

MINUTES

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|------------------------------------|----|---|
| Minute of Meeting of 29 April 2025 | 1. | The Minute of the Meeting of 29 April 2025 was approved . |
| Declaration of Interest | 2. | Mr Donald F. Crichton declared an interest and left the meeting during consideration of item 11 as a family member was employed within Leabharlann nan Eilean Siar. |

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

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| Outcome Report | Delivery | 3. | With reference to item 4 of the Minute of the Meeting of 26 November 2025, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the year-end progress of the 2024/25 Departmental Strategic Priorities for the Education and Children's Services Department. |
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The Report provided an update on key areas of strategic risk, progress on the strategic outcomes, and the resources identified to implement the Business Plan, and indicated that in the reporting period, there were no key areas of strategic risk identified for the Department.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle notes the year-end progress of the 2024/25 Education and Children's Services Departmental Outcome Delivery Plans.

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 2023-24 4.

With reference to item 3 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update in relation the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators relevant to Education, Skills and Children's Services and to set out performance against improvement targets.

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework is a benchmarking tool that helps Local Authorities to compare their performance using a suite of indicators and also provides data over time for trend analysis. The Appendix to the Report sets out the indicators agreed for annual reporting and the Department's performance in 2023-24 and the preceding five years.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the continuation of improvement activity in relation to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework indicators.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Report by HM Inspectors of Education: Sgoil Uige and Sgoil Àraich Uige – June 2023 5.

With reference to item 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of 26 November 2024 the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of the inspection of Sgoil Ùige and Sgoil Àraich Ùige by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland.

The Report indicated that Sgoil Ùige and Sgoil Àraich Ùige were re-inspected by a team of HM Inspectors in February 2025. This inspection followed a grading of 'Weak' in the quality indicator for Teaching and Learning in June 2023 and a follow-up inspection in June 2024 where insufficient progress was found to have been made. The inspection team visited for two days. Upon conclusion of the inspection, the Acting Headteacher and the Executive Headteacher for Rural Primary Schools continued their work to lead and implement the Action Plan and take forward the new recommendations alongside staff in Sgoil Ùige

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

(1) supports the Acting Headteacher, Sgoil Ùige and Sgoil Àraich Ùige to continue to make improvements in Sgoil Ùige in line with the HMI recommendations; and

(2) continues to monitor improvement and the development of the action plan.

Education Provision: Review of Mothballed School Provisions 2025/26 6.

With reference to item 8 of the Minute of the Meeting of 18 June 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to mothballed educational provisions at Tolsta School, Breasclate School, Pairc School and Bernera School and to review the status of each, as is required annually.

The Report indicated that the Comhairle has four mothballed education provisions that were placed in that status due to significant falling rolls and by consultation and agreement with parents at the time the initial decision was made.

Tolsta school has been mothballed for six years, and, over that period, there have been no requests or expressions of interest from any party to reinstate provision at this school and no new roll has been identified. Approval is sought for a further period of mothballing to permit conclusion of closure consultation.

The English Medium class at Breascleite School was mothballed with effect from August 2020. In the first two years of mothballing there were some expressions of interest in reinstating the English Medium provision, supported by the school's Parent Council but no viable cohort was identified. There have been no expressions of interest in enrolment in Breascleite English Medium for August 2025.

Pairc School Gaelic Medium class was mothballed with effect from August 2020. No requests or representations have been received for enrolment into Gaelic Medium at Pairc School for August 2025.

Bernera School has been mothballed for three years. There have been no requests or representations for enrolment into Bernera School for August 2025.

The four mothballed provisions at Tolsta, Breascleite, Pairc and Bernera have all been subject to review and, in each case, an educationally viable roll sufficient to consider reinstatement of the provision has not been identified and continuation of mothballed status should be considered in for Pairc Gaelic Medium provision and Breascleite English Medium provision. It was proposed to begin the process of the statutory consultation for the permanent closure of Tolsta and Bernera Schools in the academic session 2025-26.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) begin the statutory consultation process for the permanent closure of Tolsta School in the academic session 2025-26; and**
- (2) continue to mothball the English Medium provision at Breascleite School for a period of one year with a commitment to review this status again ahead of the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year;**
- (3) continue to mothball the Gaelic Medium provision at Pairc School for a period of one year with a commitment to review this status again ahead of the commencement of the 2026-27 academic year; and**
- (4) begin the statutory consultation process for the permanent closure of Bernera School in the academic session 2025-26.**

School Engagement 7.
Officer

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the current role and operational progress of the School Engagement Officer, a service delivered in partnership between the Comhairle and Police Scotland. The Report indicated that through reviews undertaken by Comhairle secondary schools, particularly The Nicolson Institute, and the work of the Youth Justice Sub-Committee it was identified that there was potential for partnership between the Comhairle and Police Scotland to develop the Campus Police Officer model and establish a School Engagement Officer role in the Western Isles.

The School Engagement Officer (SEO) works collaboratively with the Comhairle to provide the services at the schools at the direction of the Head Teachers. The collaborative working is to provide a safe and secure environment for those who work and study within educational premises across the schools whilst tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and providing early and effective intervention through engagement work.

The role of the School Engagement Officer is progressing and evolving to meet the ever-changing needs of the educational establishments and communities that it serves. The Comhairle and Police Scotland will continue to collaborate to ensure that the agreed outcomes are achieved.

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Additional Support Needs Transport 8.

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the development of a standalone Additional Support Needs (ASN) Home to School Transport Policy and sought approval for the adoption of the Policy.

The Report that the ASN Home to School Transport Policy would supersede Section 14 of the 2011 Home to School Transport Policy as the relevant policy guidance for ASN Transport. It would be the standalone policy on the provision of ASN Transport to pupils by the Comhairle, and would provide more operational clarity, as the provision of ASN Transport is managed and operated by the Education and Children's Services Department along with the relevant budget. The policy has been developed to ensure it remains in line with current Scottish legislation, reflects the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and promotes the Comhairle's commitment to equity, accessibility and inclusion for children and young people with additional support needs.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approves the revised ASN Home to School Transport Policy (June 2025) for implementation from the start of the 2025/2026 academic session.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Volunteer Centre Western Isles 9.

With reference to item 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for the payment of grant for 2025/2026 to Volunteer Centre Western Isles.

The Report indicated that the Volunteer Centre Western Isles is a partner in the local Third Sector Interface, TSIWI (Third Sector Interface Western Isles), and currently employ seven members of staff covering the whole of the Western Isles. The Centre works closely with the Comhairle's Community Learning and Development Service and local Councillors to promote volunteering and to support volunteer-involving organisations and volunteers.

The Report further indicated that the Volunteer Centre Western Isles receives Scottish Government funding through the interface partnership TSIWI which has been supplemented by financial support from the Comhairle.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

(1) extend the Service Level Agreement between Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar and Volunteer Centre Western Isles to 31 March 2026; and

(2) approve the payment of grant to Volunteer Centre Western Isles of £22,000 for 2025/2026.

Adult Learning Annual Report 10.

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the Adult Learning Team Annual Report 2024– 2025. The Report indicated that the Comhairle's Adult Learning Team provide learning opportunities that support the strategic priorities of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2024-27 with a focus on the aims of the Adult Learning Partnership.

The service currently provides learning opportunities in the following areas; Literacy & Numeracy, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), and Gaelic Family Learning (GFL). The service was not able to deliver a wider Community Based Adult Learning Programme in 2024-25, however this will be addressed in the coming year. Learners can access both accredited and nonaccredited programmes along with one-to-one support.

It is recommended that the Comhairle:

(1) note the Adult Learning Annual Report 2024-25; and

(2) approve continued focus on the following key priorities:

- **promoting and providing opportunities to gain experience and develop skills for life, learning and work;**
- **empowering people to navigate economic hardships; and**
- **finding creative ways to collaborate with our partners to mitigate against the effects of poverty in our communities.**

LIBRARIES

Leabharlainn nan Eilean Siar Strategy 2025-27 11.

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval to proceed to formal consultation on the Leabharlainn na Eilean Siar Strategy 2025-2027. The Report indicated that Leabharlainn nan Eilean Siar provides services across the Outer Hebrides delivered through a network of four branches and two mobile library vans.

The Report further detailed that as a statutory service tasked with providing library facilities for all person's resident in the Outer Hebrides, it is vital that the service has a focus on both national and local priorities as set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan, the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy and in Scotland's Public Library Strategy. In addition to seeking approval to proceed to formal consultation, the Report sought approval to for the re-establishment of the Libraries Member Officer Working Group to support the development of the Strategy.

It is recommended that the Comhairle:

(1) approve formal consultation on the draft Leabharlainn na Eilean Siar Strategy 2025-27;

(2) re-establish the Library Member Officer Working Group to support the development of the Strategy; and

(3) approve the Leabharlainn na Eilean Siar Action Plan 2025-26.

It was further agreed to recommend that the Comhairle appoint the following Members to the Libraries Member Officer Working Group:

- **Mr Paul Finnegan (ex-officio)**
- **Mr Mustapha Hocine (ex-officio)**
- **Mr Iain A MacNeil**
- **Mr Malcolm K MacDonald**
- **Dr Frances Murray**
- **Mr Rae MacKenzie**
- **Mr Norman MacDonald**

LOCAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE: TEACHING STAFF

Minute of Meeting of 12 June 2025 12.

The Minute of the Local Negotiating Committee: Teaching Staff Meeting of 12 June 2025 was **noted**.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports Outstanding 13. 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.

PRIVATE ITEMS

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 14 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, and item 15 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.

Residential Placements for Children and Young People 14. * With reference to item 17 of the Minute of the Meeting of 29 April 2025, the Chief Officer, Children's Services/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.

Barra and Vatersay Community Campus Update 15. * With reference to item 16 of the Minute of the Meeting of the Meeting of 29 April 2025, the Chief Executive and Project Manager submitted a Report which provided an update on progress with the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus Project.

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

(1) the welcome announcement in the Programme for Government for 2025/26 that the Barra and Vatersay Campus Project will go ahead; and

(2) that a meeting with Scottish Government officials will take place in June 2025 to consider issues regarding delivery of the Project, including project governance, scope and funding mechanisms.