



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Stornoway and through Microsoft Teams on Tuesday, 18 June 2024 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

Mr Paul Finnegan (Chair)
Mr Mustapha Hocine (Vice-Chair)
Mr Kenneth J Maclean
Mr Paul Steele
Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Norman Misty Macdonald
Mr Donald Macsween
Mr Malcolm K Macdonald
Mr Angus McCormack
Rev Bruce Jardine
Rev Hugh Stewart
Father Michael Macdonald

Mr Iain M Macleod
Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Ranald Fraser
Mr Kenneth Macleod
Mr Calum Maclean
Mr Rae Mackenzie
Dr Frances Murray
Mr Norman Macdonald
Mr Finlay Stewart

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Iain A Macneil
Mr Angus Morrison
Mr Iain Maclean Macaulay

Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr
Mr Donald A Macleod
Ms Anne Macleod
Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg
Mr Steven Ferguson

Ms Joanna Morrison
Mr Iain GG Campbell
Ms Mary Clare Ferguson
Mr Sandy Gomez

Prayer

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

MINUTES

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| Minute of Meeting of 23 April 2024 | 1 | The Minute of the Meeting of 23 April 2024 was approved . |
| Declaration of Interest | 2 | Mr Gordon Murray declared an interest in item 11 as a Lecturer at the University of the Highlands and Islands North, West and Hebrides. |
| Throughcare and Aftercare Policy and Procedures | 3 | The Head of Children's Services/ Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which sought approval for the revised Throughcare, Continuing Care and Aftercare Policy and Procedures manual and approve an uplift in the leaving care grant for Care Experienced Young People (CEYP). The Report noted that Throughcare and Aftercare services should be made available to all CEYP who meet the criteria in terms of Section 29 and 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, and work from the perspective of the young person. CEYP currently receive £2200 to assist them with setting up their first or new home. This sum of money has not been increased in some years and given the cost-of-living increase in recent years, requires an uplift. |

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) **approve the Throughcare, Continuing Care and Aftercare Policy and Procedures; and**
- (2) **increase the Leaving Care Grant to £2500.**

Taigh Solas (Bairns Hoose) Update Report 4

With reference to item 7 of the Minute of the Meeting of 23 April 2024, the Head of Children's Services/Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to Taigh Solas, (Bairns Hoose) developments. The Report noted that due to planning and budgetary challenges and complications with the original planned location of Taigh Solas, a decision was taken to explore the Education Development Centre (EDC) as an alternative option. Plans have been completed and a high-level costing produced which indicate that the EDC is a suitable venue and the works required can be completed within budget.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve that the Education Development Centre is the location of Taigh Solas, the Outer Hebrides Bairns Hoose.

Update on Consultation with Users of the Ground Floor of St Lennans Centre 5

With reference to item 8 of the Minute of the Meeting of 23 April 2024, the Extended Learning Manager submitted a Report which provided an update on the consultation with users of the Pointers Youth Centre in relation to the Bairns Hoose initiative. The Report noted that a consultation had been held with users of the Pointers Youth Centre to gain an insight into how users feel about a potential move from the current base in St Lennan's Centre.

The Report noted that a total of 109 responses were received in relation to a consultation paper; the findings of the consultation demonstrated that young people who currently access support via Pointers were predominantly against the proposal to relocate.

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

HM Inspectors CLD Progress Visit – April 2024 6

The Extended Learning Manager submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of a Progress Visit by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) service and partners in the Western Isles. The Report noted that in December 2023, HMIE announced a series of CLD Progress Visits to each of the 32 Local authority areas between August 2023 and June 2024 to consider progress against the published three-year plan (2021-2024) for the local authority area; the Inspection Team visited the Western Isles from 26-29 February 2024, and met with the CLD Steering Group, employees and partner organisations. A number of focus groups were held, and evidence was reviewed in support of the local delivery plan.

The Report detailed areas of positive progress, areas for development, noted that the outcome of the visit was graded as satisfactory, and inspectors confirmed that no return visit is required. The CLD Team will continue to work to improve the service in line with national expectations and pursue delivery of the local service plan.

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

Report by HM Inspectors of Education: Sgoil Lionail and Sgoil Àraich 7

The Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of the inspection of Sgoil Lionail and Sgoil Àraich Lionail by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland. The Report noted that Sgoil Lionail and Sgoil Àraich Lionail were inspected by a team of HM Inspectors in January 2024 in a short model inspection.

The Report indicated that the Education Scotland evaluations for Sgoil Lionail primary classes were:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment – Good
- Raising Attainment and Achievement – Good

Education Scotland evaluations for Sgoil Àraich Lionail were:

- Learning, Teaching and Assessment - Good
- Securing Children's Progress - Good

The Care Inspectorate evaluations for Sgoil Àraich Lionail were:

- Nurturing Care and Support - Very Good
- Play and Learning - Good
- Children Experience High Quality Facilities - Good
- Quality Assurance and Improvement are Well Led - Good
- Staff Deployment - Good

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

Education Provision: Annual Review of Mothballed Schools 24-25

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With reference to item 7 of the Minute of the Meeting of 13 June 2023, the Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services Manager submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to mothballed education provisions at Tolsta School, Breascleite School, Pairc School and Bernera School. The Report noted that Tolsta School was mothballed from August 2019 and Bernera School followed in August 2021. In addition to the two full mothballed schools, there are two schools that have had part of their provision mothballed from August 2020: Breascleite School (English Medium) and Pairc School (Gaelic Medium).

The Report noted that 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 all four cases.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree to continue to mothball:

- (1) **Tolsta School for a period of one year or until conclusion of statutory consultation for permanent closure, whichever occurs first;**
- (2) **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 2025-26 academic year;**
- (3) **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 2025-26 academic year; and**
- (4) **Bernera School for a period of one year with a commitment to review this status again ahead of the commencement of the 2024-25 academic year subject to a future report to consider moving to statutory closure consultation.**

Early Learning and Childcare Provision in the Western Isles

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The Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the current early years provision and estate. The Report indicated that there are 19 registered early learning and childcare settings. In addition to this there are also two nurseries and one childminder who operate as partner providers. In addition to that, there are eight additional independent childminders.

The Report noted that there is significant legislation, regulation and statutory requirements that govern and underpin early learning and childcare. The most recent being the change to legislation in relation to deferred entry to Primary 1, which has had a significant and increasing impact on overall operating capacity; there were 16 deferred entries made in 2023-24. This figure has increased to 47 for 2024-25 to date.

There is a growing number of children in settings who have assessed additional support for learning needs requiring extra support and staffing to meet their needs. In some instances, this also restricts the overall capacity of the setting.

The Report further noted that the Early Years service has been experiencing challenges in the recruitment of staff over the last two years in particular. This is especially the case in some geographical locations and with Gaelic-speaking staff. The service is working to address this through recruitment fairs, engagement with school leavers and promotion of the Childcare Foundation Apprenticeship pathway.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) convene a Members' Seminar to consider all options and opportunities in relation to Early Learning and Childcare Provision in the Western Isles.**

Move More Activity Programme 10

The Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services submitted a Report in relation to the Move More Western Isles Programme. The Report noted that the Move More Programme operated on a system of direct referral from healthcare professionals to the service through the NHS SCI Gateway platform to a supported 12-week Programme and ongoing interventions.

The Report indicated that on 12 April 2024, the Director for Public Health, NHS Western Isles had informed that the Comhairle that NHS Western Isles was terminating funding for the Move More Programme with immediate effect and would not be renewing the service level agreement that expired on 31 March 2024. The Report further noted that subsequent correspondence and meetings with the Director of Public Health, NHS Western Isles has not resulted in any change of position from NHS Western Isles. The Comhairle has made a commitment to continue negotiations in the interests of reaching a satisfactory solution.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) note that NHS Western Isles had confirmed that its funding for the Move More Programme had been discontinued;**
- (2) authorise the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services to continue discussions with NHS Western Isles:**
 - (i) with the aim of restoring the Move More programme; and**
 - (ii) in relation to any new scheme for delivery of physical intervention support in the Outer Hebrides.**

Mr Gordon Murray declared an interest in item 11 as a Lecturer at the University of the Highlands and Islands North, West and Hebrides and left the meeting during consideration of the item.

UHI NWH Online Delivery 11

Following a Notice of Motion to the Comhairle on 1 May 2024, the Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed initial findings on the potential consideration of the University of the Highlands and Islands North, West and Hebrides (UHI NWH) to move to a largely online model of tuition. The Report noted that following the acceptance of the motion at the Comhairle meeting, UHI NWH issued a press statement on 5 May 2024 responding to 'inaccurate reports of moving to a largely online mode of tuition'. The statement went on to clarify the UHI NWH position on the matter.

The Report indicated that officers of Education and Children's Services have subsequently conducted an initial survey of secondary school headteachers and with e-Sgoil to establish what issues or changes they have noted in terms of any move to online course delivery or tuition in partnership with UHI.

A preliminary analysis of responses indicate that there has been a small increase in the number of courses and programmes that UHI NWH proposes to deliver online where provision was previously face-to-face. More detailed analysis is required to establish the scale of this in full and to consider the potential impact on in-school and post-school pathways to qualifications and employment.

It was agreed;

- (1) to note the Report; and**
- (2) that a Report would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee providing more detailed analysis of the matter.**

Reports
Outstanding

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

It was agreed to note the Report.

