



COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR

EDUCATION, SPORT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held in Council Chamber,
Council Offices, Stornoway on Tuesday, 26
November 2024 at 10.00am.

PRESENT

Mr Paul Finnegan (Chair)	
Mr Mustapha Hocine (Vice-Chair)	
Mr Kenneth J Maclean	Mr Iain M Macleod
Mr Paul Steele	Ms Susan Thomson
Mr Kenny M Macleod	Mr Robert Mackenzie
Mr Ranald Fraser	Mr Norman Misty 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	Father Michael Macdonald
Rev Bruce Jardine	Rev Hugh Stewart

APOLOGIES

Mr George Murray

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Iain A MacNeil	Mr Uisdean Robertson
Mr Angus Morrison	Mr Gordon Murray
Mr Donald F. Crichton	Mr Iain M. Macaulay
Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE	

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Malcolm Burr	Mr Iain G. Smith
Mr Donald A Macleod	Mr Jack Libby
Ms Mary Clare Ferguson	Mr David Downham
Ms Sally Kane	Ms Patricia Macleod
Mr Iain GG Campbell	Mr Maxwell Smart
Mr Sandy Gomez	Mr Neil Macleod
Ms Anne Macleod	Mr Dan MacPhail
Mr Derek Mackay	Mr Steven Ferguson

Prayer

The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Rev Bruce Jardine.

MINUTES

Minute of Meeting of 24 September 2024	1	The Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 2024 was approved .
Minute of LNCT Meeting of 19 November 2024	2	The Minute of the Local Negotiating Committee: Teaching Staff Meeting of 19 November 2024 was noted .
Declaration of Interest	3	There were no declarations of interest.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Outcome Delivery Report	4	With reference to the item 3 of the Minute of the Meeting of 28 November 2023, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report presenting the half-year progress of the 2024/25 Strategic Priorities for the Education, Skills and Children's Services Department. The Report detailed key areas of strategic risk, progress on the strategic outcomes and the resources identified to implement the business plan.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.

SPORT

Support for Local Club Sport Groups	5	With reference to item 10 of the Minute of the Meeting of 28 November 2023, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for continued financial support for the two local ClubSport Groups. The Report indicated that the Local ClubSport Groups are continuing to operate grant aid programmes that provide valuable assistance for local clubs and organisations. ClubSport Lewis and Harris (CSLH) and the ClubSport Uist and Barra (CSUB) have submitted grant applications to enable the organisations to provide a range of grant options for affiliated clubs and associations. 75 clubs and 5 associations are currently supported, with approx. 3000 members in total.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve continued support for the Local ClubSport Groups through devolving £10k to the ClubSport Lewis and Harris and £6k to ClubSport Uist and Barra Sports from the 2024/25 Sports Grant budget.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

Children's Parliament Call to Action	6	With reference to item 3 of the Minute of the Meeting of 15 June 2004, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to the four 'calls to action' as set out in the original presentation by the Children's Parliament: tackling bullying and cyberbullying; having specialist Art and PE Teachers in schools and nurseries; repairing play spaces; involving children in decision making across the Western Isles. The Report detailed the current position in respect of each action. It was noted that options and opportunities for enhanced young person engagement in local democracy would be explored and progressed.
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It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report.

National Improvement Framework: Annual Report, Plan and Stretch Aims	7	The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the annual statutory Report and Plan for the National Improvement Framework and associated Scottish Attainment Challenge Stretch Aims Report. The Report indicated that the Comhairle's National Improvement Framework Plan takes account of other strategic planning frameworks that influence education improvement. This includes the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy and Business Plan, the Northern Alliance Improvement Plan and Plana Cànanain Gàidhlig Comhairle nan Eilean Siar 2023-2028 (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Gaelic Language Plan 2023-2028).
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The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services indicated that in addition to the Comhairle Gaelic First Policy, the Scottish Government has a 1+2 language learning approach, which entitles pupils to start a first additional language (L2) from P1 and continuously until the end of the Broad General Education (BGE) at the end of secondary S3. The second additional language (L3) teaching should start no later than P5 until the end of P7 and again at some point in the secondary BGE.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) approve the priorities, actions and targets set out in the National Improvement Framework Plan 2024-25 and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Stretch Aims Report for 2024-25 (24-26); and**

(2) agree to arrange an Education Seminar which would include consideration of the National Improvement Framework and statutory reporting.

Building Literacy and Awareness of Anti-Racism Racial and 8

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the need for Education and Children's Services in the Western Isles to build racial literacy and embed anti-racist practice. The Report noted that the Vision, Values and Call to Action from the National Discussion on Education highlighted the importance of a curriculum that advances human rights, equity, inclusivity, and appreciation of diversity to recognise, respect, and represent the unique talents, characteristics, needs, interests, and potential of all learners. Identifying principles such as anti-racist education as being essential in creating a contemporary curriculum that prepares learners for the modern world.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

(1) agree to arrange a Seminar for Elected Members on Promoting Anti Racist Education in Scotland; and

(2) support building racial literacy and awareness of anti-racism within Education and Children's Services in the Western Isles.

The Nicolson Institute – Further Inspection 9

With reference to item 8 of the Minute of the Meeting of 6 February 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of the further inspection visit at The Nicolson Institute by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland, as published on 8 October 2024.

The Report indicated that The Nicolson Institute had made progress since the original inspection. The school will continue to receive support, particularly focusing on the matters raised in relation to Enhanced Provision to ensure further improvements. The Governance Group will meet routinely to review progress and ensure that the resources and support required to deliver the Action Plan are being provided.

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

Sgoil Ùige – Inspection Report 10

With reference to item 7 of the Minute of the Meeting of 28 November 2023, 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.

Sgoil Ùige and Sgoil Àraich Ùig were inspected by a team of HM Inspectors in June 2023 in a short model inspection. Upon conclusion of the inspection, the Executive Headteacher for Rural Primary Schools has commenced work with the staff of the school to develop and implement an action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement and the Head of School for Laxdale School will provide additional leadership support on a temporary interim basis.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

(1) note the Report; and

(2) supports the new Head Teacher, Sgoil Ùige and Sgoil Àraich Ùige to develop and implement the new action plan which will address the areas for improvement within the HMI report.

Home to School Transport 11 The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for updates to the Home to School Travel Policy. The Report noted that the refreshed Home to School Policy focused on updating the policy to be more specific on the entitlement and application process along with clarifying the criteria used to determine who can be issued a bus pass to enable them to travel on the Home to School Transport Bus Services, including clarifying the priority order for bus pass allocation and incorporate the use of Under 22 NEC Travel Card.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Home to School Transport Policy.

Comhairle Playpark Renewal Programme Update 12 The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought further consideration for the investment of Scottish Government Playpark Renewal funding and the mechanisms for investment in the playpark estate. The Report noted that in August 2021, the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills confirmed a government programme that would provide funding to local authorities to invest in renewal of playparks with the aim of creating increased access for children to quality play in their own community. The funding was provided in instalments over a period of five years from 2021 to 2026.

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services indicated that there is a need prompt action in relation to the agreement of projects to ensure grant funding from previous years of the scheme is utilised.

The Chief Officer confirmed that the available funding was not sufficient to facilitate the renewal of previously identified playparks in full but could support some renewal works in specific playparks across the estate.

The Report noted that to-date, the Comhairle has received £123,000 and this funding will be allocated promptly to projects at playpark locations identified for funding in 2023: Leverburgh; Cearns; Bayhead; Tarbert (Scott Road); Castlebay; Daliburgh; Vatisker; Plasterfield; and North Uist (Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath) based on technical appraisal of delivery. Further funding of £93,000 is expected in 2024-25 and £156,000 in 2025-26. Upon receipt of this subsequent funding by the Comhairle, as many as possible of the remaining sites will be allocated a share of the grant to undertake improvement works until all funds are distributed.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:

- (1) approve the proposed playparks eligible for grant funding, as detailed in paragraph 6.7 of the Report, and**
- (2) authorise the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services and the Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure to agree improvements and allocation of grant funds to approved playparks based on technical appraisal and all available grant funds are distributed.**

Stornoway Primary Sports Development Update 13 With reference to item 12 of the Minute of the Meeting of 6 February 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to the proposed sports facility at Stornoway Primary. The Report noted that following receipt of initial tender prices that were well above the budget for the building, it was agreed by the Comhairle in February 2024 to reduce the overall size of the building to bring the development closer to the confirmed budget. The estimated cost of this revised building was £2.25M. The additional £250,000 of funding required in addition to that already allocated in the capital programme is funded from the Universal free School Meal expansion programme in recognition of the increased capacity for dining created in the school from PE lessons moving from the internal hall to the new games hall.

The Report further indicated that subject to a number of project variables, it is currently forecast that construction on-site will commence in the spring of 2025, with completion and occupancy being planned for late autumn 2025.

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

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 Update

14 *

With reference to item 17 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 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 that the Project Executive Board (PEB) had met, likely for the last time, on 11 November 2024, and that the revised Project Board would meet under the new governance structure in January 2024.

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

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Integrated
Children's Services
Plan 2023-2026

15

The Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which sought approval of the revised Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026. The Report detailed that the Comhairle is an integral element of the Outer Hebrides Children and Young People's Planning Partnership which is in turn part of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership. Children and Young People's Planning Partnerships (CYPPP) are legally required to have an Integrated Children's Services Plan (ICSP). The Corporate Parenting Plan has been incorporated within the updated ICSP to create a less complex planning landscape. The outcome of the inspection noted 'Very Good' in relation to 'how well do we support people's wellbeing?' and 'how good is our staff team?'

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the revised Integrated Children's Services Plan 2023-2026.

Western Isles
Housing Support
Service

16

The Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed the findings from a Care Inspectorate inspection of the Housing Support Service. The Report noted that the Housing Support Service is a relatively new service for vulnerable young people between the ages of 16 and 19, with a particular focus on supporting the needs of care experienced young people.

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

Chief Social Worker
Annual Report
2023/24

17

The Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed the Chief Social Work Officer Report 2023/24. The Report detailed the statutory work undertaken during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The Report noted the social care landscape is marked by several significant pressures, including an ageing population, increased demand, rising complexity of needs, social care cost escalation, workforce shortages, evolving legislation, pandemic effects, and the cost-of-living crisis, disproportionately impacting the most disadvantaged communities.

It was agreed to recommend, insofar as the interests of the Committee were concerned, that the Comhairle note the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2023/24.

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

18 *

With reference to item 4 of the Minute of the Meeting of 24 September 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.

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.

Fostering and Adoption Inspection Update

19 *

The Chief Social Work Officer submitted a Report which detailed the recent findings and improvement actions following an inspection of the Fostering and Adoption Service. The Report noted that Fostering and Adoption services are vital in assessing, approving and supporting foster carers and the recruitment and assessment of prospective adoptive parents and their support thereafter, to care for some of our most vulnerable children.

In May 2024, the Comhairle's fostering and adoption services were inspected by the Care Inspectorate. The outcome of both inspections highlighted significant areas for improvement and an Improvement Plan was produced to address the identified areas for improvement.

It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note:

- (1) the findings of the Care Inspectorate Report – Fostering and Adoption Services;**
- (2) the Improvement Plan and progress made; and**
- (3) the changing landscape of care placements, with kinship placements far outnumbering the number of foster and adoptive placements in the Western Isles.**

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Reports Outstanding

20

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.