



# 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 24 September 2024  
at 10.00am.

PRESENT	Mr Paul Finnegan (Chair) Mr Mustapha Hocine (Vice-Chair) Mr Kenneth J Maclean Mr Paul Steele Mr Robert Mackenzie Mr Norman Misty Macdonald Mr Donald Macsween Mr Malcolm K Macdonald Mr Angus McCormack Mr Finlay M Stewart Rev Hugh Stewart	Mr Iain M Macleod Mr Kenny M Macleod Mr Ranald Fraser Mr Kenneth Macleod Mr Calum Maclean Mr Rae Mackenzie Dr Frances Murray Mr Norman Macdonald
APOLOGIES	Ms Susan Thomson Father Michael Macdonald	Rev Bruce Jardine
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Iain A Macneil Mr Angus Morrison Mr Gordon Murray Mr John A Maciver Mr Duncan MacInnes MBE	Mr Uisdean Robertson Mr John Norman Macdonald Mr Donald F Crichton Mr Iain M Macaulay
OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE	Mr Donald A Macleod Ms Carol Burns Mr Jack Libby Mr Maxwell Smart Ms Peigi Nicolson Ms Anne Macleod Mr Derek Mackay Ms Joanna Morrison	Mr Malcolm Burr Ms Donna Murray Ms Fiona MacInnes Begg Mr Neil Macleod Mr Anne Graham Mr David Downham Mr Steven Ferguson Mr Dan Macphail
Prayer	The Meeting was preceded in prayer by Rev Hugh Stewart	
Welcome	The Chair welcomed Mr Kenny M. Macleod to his first meeting of the Education, Sport and Children's Services Committee following his appointment as an Elected Member for the Na Hearadh Ward.	
<b>MINUTES</b>		
Minute of Meeting of 18 June 2024	1	The Minute of Meeting of 18 June 2024 was <b>approved</b> .
Declaration of Interest	of 2	Mr Kenneth M Macleod declared an interest in item 8 as a community representatives on the Community Learning and Development Steering Group.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 2022-23 3

With reference to item 4 of the Minute of the Meeting of 13 June 2023, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update on performance in Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) indicators relevant to Education, Skills and Children's Services and to set out performance against improvement targets.

The Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) 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. In order to ensure that comparisons are made with similar Authorities they are each placed in a "Family Group". For benchmarking of Children's Services indicators Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has been grouped with; Dundee City, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, North Lanarkshire, Inverclyde, West Dunbartonshire and Glasgow City.

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

**CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 4 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 4\*

With reference to item 6 of the Minute of the Meeting of 23 April 2024, the Chief Officer, Children's Services 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.**

It was agreed that the public, including the press, be excluded from the Meeting during consideration of item 5 on the grounds that exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 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).

Review of Residential Care Provision 5\*

The Chief Officer, Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update on the review of the care estate and options to improve resources and access to provision locally. The Report indicated that the Review has been multi-faceted with a scope to consider all care support resources, from the provision of an on-island residential resource for children and young people with complex/comorbid needs, through to wider resource supports in substitute family care (fostering), residential provision for at risk young people (LAC), preventative support in schools and communities.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the findings of the Report; and**
- (2) agree to the establishment of a Children's Services Member Officer Working Group with a remit to include the appraisal of options for, and implications of, developing an on-island complex care residential facility.**

Foster Care Fee Rates 6

The Chief Officer, Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for an increase in the fostering fee rate. The Report indicated that in 2016 Children's Services introduced a 3 tier/level fostering service with separate fees for each level, with each level being dependent on carers skills, experiences, qualifications and the expectations the Service has in terms of type and level of care required for a particular child.

The Report further indicated that Children's Services are currently undertaking a review of how it delivers services to vulnerable children throughout the Western Isles and as part of this review, the Service is looking to enhance its fostering service in order to be less reliant on both local and out of region residential and residential placements.

Further enhancing the fostering service will form part of this review but until such time as this piece of work is concluded, it is imperative that existing foster carers are retained, and additional foster carers are recruited.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle agree that:**

- (1) given the length of time without any increase to the fee, the fostering fee rate be increased by 10%;**
- (2) the rate of fee paid would be reviewed every 2 years;**
- (3) the retention fee would not apply to foster carers offering short breaks/respite and for continuing care where the young person resides in the placement intermittently; and**
- (4) Level 3 carers, should they wish to continue to receive the fee beyond the 6-week retention period, to provide on average 22 hours per week to supporting Children's Services.**

Child Protection National Minimum Dataset 7

The Chief Officer, Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed child protection activity in the period December 2023 to May 2024 via completion of the National Minimum Dataset template. The Minimum Dataset for Child Protection Committees is a 'package' of resources that collectively support Scotland's 30 Child Protection Committees to collate, analyse and report on an agreed set of indicators in a consistent and meaningful manner.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note:**

- (1) that the number of child protection activities in the past two quarters shows a general cycle of the data increasing by 50% quarter by quarter;**
- (2) the number of children on the Child Protection Register is at its highest level for the past seven quarters;**
- (3) the strong performance in terms of meeting the timescales for Child Protection meetings; and**
- (4) the significant increase in both offence and non-offence referrals to the Children's Reporter.**

**COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Mr Kenneth M. Macleod declared an interest in item 8 as a community representatives on the Community Learning and Development Steering Group.

Community Learning and Development Partnership Plan 2024-27	8	<p>With reference to item 22 of the Minute of the Meeting of 21 June 2024 the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for the publication of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2024 – 27.</p> <p>The Report noted that the Community Empowerment Act (Scotland) and National Standards for Community Engagement place a legal duty on Community Planning Partners to demonstrate impact through partnership working and listening to communities. The CLD Partnership Plan 2024-2027 reflects the key themes which relate to both strategic and operational plans moving forward.</p>
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The CLD Plan for 2024-2027 has been created in conjunction with a range of Partner agencies via the CLD Steering Group brought together to consider key issues in communities and adopting a partnership approach to gain greater results

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle approve the Community Learning and Development Partnership Plan 2024-27 and agree to its implementation.**

Young Partnership Performance Update	Scot – 9	<p>The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided an update in relation to Young Scot performance in the Outer Hebrides. The Report indicated that in partnership with Young Scot, (Scotland's national youth information platform) the Comhairle via Community Learning and Development section promotes access to Young Scot services including the Young Scot Identity Card, discounts and online services. The Young Scot Strategy sets out to help young people:</p>
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- 'Be Informed' by making informed decisions and challenging misinformation.
- 'Be Connected' by taking advantage of our opportunities, discounts and entitlements to support their wellbeing.
- 'Be Empowered' by exercising their rights as system changers, influence decision-making, and sharing power both locally and nationally.

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

Volunteer Western Funding	Centre Isles 10	<p>With reference to item 9 of the Minute of the Meeting of 19 September 2024, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which sought approval for the payment of grant for 2024/ 2025 to Volunteer Centre Western Isles (VCWI). 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 they 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.</p>
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The Report further indicated that the Volunteer Centre Western Isles receives Scottish Government funding through the interface partnership TSIWI, and this 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 2025;**
- (2) approve the payment of grant to Volunteer Centre Western Isles of £22,000 for 2024/25; and**
- (3) authorise the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services to promote and publicise the opportunities for volunteering.**

**EDUCATIONAL PROVISION**

e-Sgoil Impact 2023-24	Annual Report	11	With reference to item 7 of the Minute of the Meeting of 19 September 2023, the Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the e-Sgoil impact during Session 2023-24.
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The Report indicated that e-Sgoil had further developed a broad range of programmes to support schools and learners from across Scotland. Live, interactive learning sessions covering all levels of the curriculum (including Gaelic Medium Education) have been positively evaluated.

The Report further indicated that e-Sgoil had attracted a significant amount of additional funding during financial year 2023-24. The total income for the year totalled £2,187,578. £935,576 of this total was spent locally within the Comhairle area. e-Sgoil continues to support Comhairle schools to broaden their curricular offer and ensure greater resilience during periods of staff absence.

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

Reports by Care Inspectorate of Early Learning and Childcare Provision	12	The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of the Comhairle's Early Learning and Childcare settings engagement with the Care Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Care Inspectorate joint inspection visits from June 2023 to June 2024. The Report noted that in the period from June 2023 to June 2024, five Local Authority ELC settings have been inspected by the Care Inspectorate. Two Local Authority Nurseries were jointly inspected by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the Care Inspectorate. One Partner Nursery and one partner Childminder have also been inspected by the Care Inspectorate during this time.
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The Report detailed that during a Care Inspectorate Inspection four key areas are inspected:

- Key question 1: How good is our care, play and learning?
- Key question 2: How good is our setting?
- Key question 3: How good is our leadership?
- Key question 4: How good is our staff team?

During an Inspection from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education quality indicators are inspected:

- Learning, teaching, and assessment.
- Securing Children's progress.
- Leadership of change.
- Ensuring well-being equality and inclusion

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle;**

- (1) note the Report and continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings to implement continuous improvement in keeping with the Quality Frameworks; and**
- (2) make representation to the Scottish Government in relation to the structure of Inspections.**

Report by HM 13  
Inspectors of  
Education: Sgoil  
Bhaile A' Mhanaich  
June 2024

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the outcome of the inspection of Sgoil Bhaile a' Mhanaich and the Sgoil Àraich by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate jointly. The Report noted that a team a team of inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate visited Sgoil Bhaile a' Mhanaich agus Sgoil Àraich in April 2024 for a full model inspection involving a five-day visit to the school and its nursery.

The Report further noted that Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate jointly published an Inspection Report in the form of a letter on 25th June 2024. The letter sets out:

- the school's key strengths and agreed areas for improvement.
- evaluative judgements against quality indicators from Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate for the school and Sgoil Àraich using their six-point scales.
- signposting to the online summarised inspection findings (SIF) on Education Scotland's website, where further detail and recommendations are laid out.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle:**

- (1) note the findings of the Inspection Report, including key strengths and areas for development;**
- (2) supports Sgoil Bhaile a' Mhanaich agus Sgoil Àraich to develop and implement an effective Action Plan which will address the areas for improvement within the HMI report; and**
- (3) agree to arrange a Seminar on broad change and innovation in Education, including Scottish Government proposals for Education Reform.**

Northern Alliance 14  
Learning, Teaching  
and Assessment  
Project

The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the Northern Alliance Learning, Teaching and Assessment Project, the toolkit it has developed and the secondment of staff to a delivery team within each partner authority. The Report indicated that this is the final year of Scottish Government funding to support Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs). The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative is utilising this funding to improve learning, teaching, and assessment across our region. The project involves the development and implementation of a new toolkit for schools and funding for a Quality Improvement Officer for each partner authority to support implementation of the toolkit and improvement in practice. Each post is part-time for two days per week, fixed term for 11 months.

The Report further indicated that data will be gathered at local and regional level to help monitor progress over time to ensure the changes made lead to improvement.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report and continue to support the work of the Quality Improvement Officer to reduce variation and raise standards in learning, teaching, and assessment in Western Isles schools.**

Attainment: Broad General Education and SQA National Qualifications 2024 15 The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which provided a summary of attainment performance and outcomes in the Broad General Education (BGE, P1-S3) and Senior Phase (S4-6) in the 2023-24 session. The Report noted that based on the teacher judgement survey of the BGE for 2024, an average of 86.8% of curricular milestones were achieved across numeracy and literacy combined in Comhairle schools for P1, P4, P7 and S3. This compares to 87.5% in 2023, 83.2% in 2022 and 76.2% in 2021.

The Report further noted that across all SQA awards this year, the pass rate achieved in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was 81.7%, from a total of 2424 presentations. Increases in pass rate and presentations mean that, this year, more young people are successfully achieving more awards. This year's results demonstrated a strong performance overall against a context of decreasing pass rates nationally in 2024. There was an increase of 2.5% in passes at National 5 and an increase of 5.5% in those achieving Advanced Higher across all Comhairle nan Eilean Siar schools. There is, however, a reduction in the pass rate for Highers locally this year in the context of an overall reduction in passes nationally. Comhairle schools will continue to undertake a thorough analysis of results to identify and address issues that contributed to the reduction in Higher passes.

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

Collaborative Review of Additional Support Needs Education 16 The Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services submitted a Report which detailed the process and outcome of the second Three-Island Collaborative Improvement Review that took place in May 2024 as a partnership between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council, Shetland Islands Council, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES) and Education Scotland. The Report indicated that working closely with ADES and Education Scotland, it was identified that the three island authorities of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Orkney Islands Council and Shetland Islands Council would form a strong partnership to undertake a review, recognising the similarities, cross-cutting themes and issues, that delivery of education in island settings face. The collaborative review that took place in May 2024 and was the third in a series of three.

The Report further indicated that senior officers from the three authorities worked with ADES and Education Scotland staff to identify an agreed focus on additional support for learning (ASN) and inclusive education. The overarching review question was: In the context of island communities, how well does the provision for Additional Support Needs and Inclusion engage and support the needs and voices of all children and young people, equipping them for learning, life and work? Following conclusion of the review activities, the lead senior officers from the three authorities have continued to meet to evaluate the findings and plan approaches to take forward the feedback.

**It was agreed to recommend that the Comhairle note the Report, recognise the findings of the review, and support the improvement priorities it identifies.**

**CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Barra and Vatersay Community Campus 17

The Chief Executive submitted a Report which detailed progress with the Barra and Vatersay Community Campus (BVCC) Project. The Report noted that following the Special Meeting of the Comhairle held on 18 July 2024, work has focussed on implementing the decisions agreed by the Comhairle and particularly in relation to selecting a preferred delivery strategy, procurement route, including appointment of professional services. In relation to external funding, regular dialogue continues with Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) colleagues as well as communication with the First Minister and the Cabinet Secretary for Health. Project affordability, and the funding landscape generally, remains extremely challenging. However, the need to progress a re-scoped project to market testing stage is seen as being key to unlocking these affordability challenges.

The Report further indicated that due to the change in project scope and delivery vehicle, there is a need to revise the project governance structure which previously included hubNorth Scotland Limited (hNSL) as delivery vehicle and NHS Western Isles (NHS WI) as co-Project Sponsor. The Project Executive Board, which comprised senior officials from the Comhairle, NHS WI, hNSL and Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) is now no longer required but a new Project Board is necessary to reflect the different scope of the Project. The revised project governance arrangements were set out in Appendix 1 of the Report.

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

- (1) note the Report; and**
- (2) agrees the revised project governance arrangements set out in Appendix 1 of the Report, with both Barraigh agus Bhatarsaigh Elected Members appointed as Members of the Project Board.**

**LOCAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE: TEACHING STAFF**

LNCT Minute of Meeting of 27 August 2024 18

The Minute of the Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee: Teaching Staff of 27 August 2024 was noted.

**PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT**

Reports Outstanding 19

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.**