

MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON 9 NOVEMBER 2010 AT STAFFIN PRIMARY SCHOOL TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE PROVISION OF EDUCATION IN STAFFIN, ISLE OF SKYE

Present:

Panel: Cllr Drew Millar, Vice Chair: ECS Committee / Member of Gaelic Committee (Chair) Rosemary Bridge, Acting Area ECS Manager - Ross, Skye and Lochaber

In attendance: Approx 12 parents and community members
Robert Barfoot, District Inspector, HMIE
Norma Young, Quality Improvement Officer, Highland Council
ECS
Marion MacSween, Education Office, Portree (Minutes)

Apologies: Cllr Hamish Fraser, Chair: Gaelic Committee

Councillor Millar welcomed those present, to the meeting. He explained the purpose of the consultation, the statutory requirements and the ECS Committee process. He also confirmed that comments would be recorded and form part of the final ECS Committee report.

Rosemary Bridge outlined the background to the proposal and summarised the consultative paper.

Councillor Millar then opened the meeting for questions.

Donald MacDonald, Chair of Comunn na Gàidhlig and Staffin Community Trust, stated that he welcomed the move to Staffin becoming a Gaelic Medium school. He said it was a most positive step and hoped it would be replicated throughout Skye and the wider Highlands. He observed that Comunn na Gàidhlig is striving to encourage Gaelic and view this as another step in the right direction. However, a wider issue that should be considered was that there was a real need for more housing in the Staffin area. The lack of housing has had an impact on the school roll. Mr MacDonald stated that he had contacted those who provide social housing and he had been advised that Staffin was not deemed a priority area by Highland Council. Mr MacDonald urged the Council to reconsider this.

Cllr Millar responded by stating that this evening's meeting was solely to discuss the change in status of the school. However that he was unaware that Highland Council took such a stance regarding housing in the area. In his opinion, housing in any part of Skye was a priority. He indicated that he would look into this and report back to Mr MacDonald.

Martin Madigan, Chair of Kilmuir Primary Parent Council, wished to ask a question relating to Kilmuir Primary School.

Cllr Millar reiterated that the meeting was to discuss the consultation relating to Staffin Primary School only and that Mr Madigan should address any queries relating to Kilmuir Primary to Rosemary Bridge, after the meeting.

Alan MacRae enquired if it was not a reasonable point to bring Kilmuir into the discussion given that it was referred to in the consultative paper. He also asked what the medium to long term plans for primary schools outwith Portree was.

Cllr Millar responded that the questions asked were outwith the scope of the consultation which they were there to discuss.

Mr MacRae noted his agreement that the meeting was about the change in status of Staffin Primary School.

Josie MacLeod, parent with 2 children attending Staffin Primary GM, referred to the projected roll figures which Rosemary Bridge had quoted from the consultative paper. The projected roll for Gaelic Medium for session 2011-12 was noted to be 17. Miss MacLeod went on to say that if the projected roll was to be 17, would this lead to a reduction in staffing at the school. She further stated that the proposal to make Staffin a Gaelic school was fantastic and was welcomed but it was very important that 2 teachers were retained to support the Council's policy on immersion at the early stages.

Rosemary Bridge replied that this was a staffing issue which she was unable to discuss that evening, but it was a valid observation.

Cllr Millar stated that there were Councillors who supported Gaelic and they would continue to give this consideration.

Morag MacLean, parent of 2 children attending Staffin Primary - 1 GM and 1 EM, asked if there would always be English medium provision at Staffin.

Rosemary Bridge advised Mrs MacLean that the English medium provision was as stated in the consultative paper.

Alan MacRae stated that he was very supportive of the Gaelic school with English Medium class but as Gaelic language was on the cusp, perhaps the time had come to be militant, to ensure the survival of the Gaelic language.

Cllr Millar responded that all responses would be given due consideration, as per the consultation document, but there would always be choice for parents.

As there were no more questions, Cllr Millar closed the meeting.

He thanked everyone for attending. He reiterated that submissions should be sent to Rosemary Bridge before 3/12/10 and also that the views of HMIe would be considered.