

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education, Children and Adult Services Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 20 January 2016 at 10.05 am.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mrs C Caddick	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs I Campbell (Vice Chair)	Mrs B McAllister
Mr A Christie	Mr D Millar (Chair)
Mr M Finlayson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr S Fuller	Mrs F Robertson (Vice Chair)
Mr B Gormley	Ms G Ross
Mr K Gowans	Mr G Ross
Mrs D Mackay	Ms K Stephen
Mr W Mackay	

NHS Highland:

Mrs M Duncan
Dr M Foxley
Dr H van Woerden

Religious Representatives:

Dr A Fraser
Ms M McCulloch
Mr G Smith

Youth Convener:

Ms C Bateson

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Mackay
Mrs G Coghill	Ms L Munro
Ms J Douglas	Mr I Renwick
Mr G Farlow	Mr J Rosie
Mr B Lobban	Mr R Saxon
Mr J MacGillivray	

In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning
Mrs B Cairns, Head of Additional Support Services, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Campbell, Head of Children's Services, Care and Learning Service
Ms S MacLeod, Head of Health, Care and Learning Service
Ms F Palin, Head of Adult Services, Care and Learning Service

Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Steven, Head of Education, Care and Learning Service
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Care and Learning Service
Ms M Campbell, Development Officer (Disability), Care and Learning Service
Ms J Campbell, Self-Directed Support Lead Officer
Mr E Foster, Finance Manager, Finance Service
Ms S Bruce, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Mr R Paterson, Cadet Presentation Team
Ms L Burnside, Cadet Presentation Team
Mr B Colman, Secretary, EIS Highland
Ms C McCombie, Secretary designate, EIS Highland
Ms K Mackay, Infant Feeding Adviser, NHS Highland

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr D Millar in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Davidson (OCB), Mr D Fallows, Mr H Fraser, Mr M Green and Mr M Rattray.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 5 – Ms J Douglas (non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial and non-financial)
Item 6 – Ms J Douglas (non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial and non-financial)
Item 15 – Mr W Mackay (non-financial)
Item 16 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Mr B Gormley declared a financial interest as his wife was employed by the Care and Learning Service and advised that, if there was any specific discussion in relation to the Family Team in Lochaber he would leave the room.

Ms G Ross declared a financial interest in those items which might raise discussion on Thurso High School, as her husband was a teacher at the school, and advised that if there was any specific discussion in relation to Thurso High School she would leave the room.

3. Outstanding Achievements Coileanaidhean Air Leth

There had been tabled a list of outstanding achievements by people and groups as follows:-

Action for Children - having celebrated their 60th birthday at the Inverness Town House, Action for Children held a reception at the Scottish Parliament, which involved leading roles for four local young people. This included a drama presentation, prepared that day, led by Rachael Mitchell of Culloden Academy and involving James Mitchell (Nairn Academy), Mikey Gregory and Siobhan Milne (Inverness High School).

Lynda Banks – in December, Lynda Banks, Head Teacher at Strathdearn Primary represented Scotland at the Commonwealth Powerlifting Championships in Vancouver and won 3 gold medals and 1 silver medal, was the overall Commonwealth Champion in her weight/age class and gained a Commonwealth Record for her 140.5kg deadlift.

Fearn Bishop - having already gained an HND in Classical Music and First Class Honours Degree in Music Computing, Fearn Bishop has gone on to be awarded a Master of Science Degree with Distinction in Human Computer Interaction by St Andrews University. Fearn, a former looked after child, recognised the support of the University, Highland Council and Barnardo's and, in an article she wrote for the Scotsman newspaper, said: "It's been a long journey to get here, and I know I couldn't have done it without all of their help".

Freya Boyd – Freya, a P6 pupil at Resolis Primary School, is now the current Scottish Judo Champion for the under 36kg A Band.

Paul Davidson - educated at Drummond School, Paul has been selected for the GB Athletics Talent Development Squad, having previously been selected to compete in the Anniversary Games at the Olympic Park in 2015.

Andrew McFarlane - 15 year old Andrew McFarlane from Inverness is a home-schooled multi-talented athlete with considerable success across numerous events. Last year he won a Silver medal at the National Championships for Indoor Heptathlon and a Bronze medal at the Scottish Championships for outdoor Decathlon. He is now placed 8th across all athletic events in the 2015 U17 SATS Challenge ranks.

The Committee **NOTED** the outstanding achievements and **AGREED** that the Director write to all those involved in recognition of their success.

4. Presentation: Cadet Presentation Team Taisbeanadh: Sgioba Òrdachaidh Caideat

Mr R Paterson and Ms L Burnside of the Cadet Service undertook a presentation on the Service Cadets (Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps) which, it was explained, were Ministry of Defence (MOD) sponsored youth development organisations that provided a structured programme for youngsters typically aged 12 to 18 and contributed to wider Government initiatives on youth development. There was no commitment or expectation that cadets would choose to join the Armed Forces. The "cadet experience", which mapped to and complemented Curriculum for Excellence, comprised four key strands and included the opportunity to

gain educational and vocational qualifications. Governance and quality assurance were provided through the MOD and delivery was by adult volunteers against a charter that emphasised the development of citizenship and life skills.

The achievements of young cadets supported a range of opportunities and broadened life opportunities for young people across a spectrum of ability. Members were provided with an insight into what Cadet organisations did and it was advised that the Cadet Services received £170 million annually from the MOD and one such projects in Aviemore that this money had been spent on was highlighted. In Scotland there were approximately 10,000 cadets supported by 2000 adult volunteers.

Ms L Burnside advised of her personal experiences of the Cadet service, including courses undertaken, skills achieved and knowledge learned. She explained how rewarding it had been in terms of the confidence it could bring to young people and communities should be backing and encouraging the service as it did provide a very useful purpose for young people.

Members welcomed the overview of the Cadet Service and the inspiring presentation from Ms Burnside. Recognition was also given to the adult volunteers who were very dedicated in their role and also to the Employers of those volunteers who gave them time off work to under Cadet Service duties. The Cadet Service contribution to various events in the Highlands was also recognised. It was queried what the drop out rate was for young people in the service and, while this information was not immediately available but would be provided at a later date, it was advised that there were different reasons for young people dropping out e.g. career choice, but it was always open for them to re-join. The service was currently reviewing the syllabus particularly with a view to trying to engage 16 to 18 year olds in the service.

The Committee **NOTED** the very informative presentation.

5. Revenue Budget – Monitoring 2015/16 Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Sgrùdadh 2015/16

Declarations of Interest:

Ms J Douglas and Mr K Gowans declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland and, in relation to Mr K Gowans, also as a Director of Eden Court Theatre but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

In addition, Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest on the basis that his wife was an employee of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/01/16 dated 29 December 2015 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update in relation to the revenue budget for Care and Learning and the monitoring position for the current year to 30 November 2015. The report also provided an update in relation to delivery of agreed budget savings and the Looked After Children budget.

In discussion, it was welcomed that the current budget forecast was for an underspend of £12k. However, this was in the main due to underspends in certain areas due to posts being left vacant, which meant that there was less provision of services in these areas.

Reference was made to the inspection regime of equipment in schools being required to ensure their safe operation. A backlog of maintenance requirements had been identified and a list of the equipment that the maintenance backlog related to was requested; what the geographic spread of the schools was; the timeline to ensure that all the equipment was inspected; and an assurance that children were safe in schools at this time. In response, it was confirmed that there was a robust inspection regime in place of equipment in schools which had identified maintenance requirements. When a maintenance issue was identified this was addressed, or if could not be, the item of equipment was decommissioned. The inspection regime was there to ensure a safe environment for children in schools.

Reference was made to the implementation of the 33 period week not now expected to deliver a net saving, but implementation was continuing and should be fully achieved by August 2017. A comment was made that this had never just been about reducing costs but more to do with an effective curriculum and therefore the implementation of the 33 period week was still vitally important.

In relation to some drop off in the level of school letting activity as charges had increased, a comment was made that there should be reduced charges to encourage more community groups to use Council buildings.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the forecast outturn based upon the year to 30 November 2015;
- ii. **NOTED** the status of the agreed budget savings and mitigating action being taken to address the forecast shortfall;
- iii. **NOTED** the pressures in relation to inspection, repair and maintenance budgets and the review work underway in relation to existing arrangements and budgets; and
- iv. **AGREED** that concerns relating to the backlog of maintenance requirements be circulated to Members of the Committee together with a timeline for the completion of inspections.

6. Capital Expenditure - Monitoring 2015/16 Caiteachas Calpa – Sgrùdadh 2015/16

Declarations of Interest:

Ms J Douglas and Mr K Gowans declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland and, in relation to Mr K Gowans, also as a Director of Eden Court Theatre but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

In addition, Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest on the basis that his wife was an employee of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in

Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/02/16 dated 12 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the Care and Learning capital programme and set out the monitoring position for the current financial year to the end of November 2015.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- in relation to the Portree Gaelic Primary School it was disappointing that the total project cost had exceeded the £9.285m budget by approximately £1.515m, the main reasons for this being highlighted in the report. The revenue consequences of this would mean an additional £150k per annum which was a worrying situation as it came at a time when there was no extra revenue funding available;
- although it was proposed that the additional funding would be allocated from the Life Cycle Investment Budget heading, it was queried what potential schemes that were earmarked for Life Cycle investment might be at risk now as a result of switching the money to the Portree Gaelic School;
- it was advised that Officers were working on all the priorities across the Council in relation to generic capital budgets and account would be taken of Life Cycle schemes in this process;
- it was intended that a report be brought to the Committee's next meeting proposing a strategy for addressing investment needs and capacity issues within Inverness Schools and it was requested that Inverness Members be able to view this report prior to it being submitted to Committee so that they could discuss any issues locally in the first instance;
- Officers had met with local Members to discuss plans for investment in Inverness Schools and this was welcomed. A further meeting with Officers was requested prior to the report being submitted to Committee in March;
- in relation to the significant slippage in free school meals budget, an assurance was sought, and received, that this money would be allocated and spent as a number of school canteens needed upgraded;
- reference was made to the Regional Sports Facility proposed for the West side of Inverness which was now progressing to the business case stage. It was suggested that the East side of Inverness should also be given due consideration and that the Council, when working with its Partners and Stakeholders looking at the feasibility of a Regional Sports Facility, also consider the East Side of Inverness for the following reasons:-
 - It had the youngest population in Highland;
 - It had the fastest growing population;
 - There was the A9 trunk road connectivity going North and South and along with the A96 trunk road;
 - The Airport and two large Retail parks were situated in that part of town;
 - The UHI campus with 700 students was situated there; and
 - A new town at Tornagrain was to be built in due course.

In response, the Chair advised that these comments would be submitted as part of the consultation process for the Regional Sports Facility;

- in relation the Alness Academy project, the process of receiving money from the Scottish Government was taking a long time, and it was queried what questions had been asked of the Scottish Government on this issue and what the response

had been. Pupils were becoming frustrated at the situation as the building was in a lot of disrepair. It was queried how this issue was being communicated to pupils and whether anything more could be done. In response, the Chair confirmed that a letter had been sent to the Cabinet Secretary, Scottish Government and a response was awaited;

- an update on progress on the Inverness High School projects and whether completion dates had been set was requested by Councillor B McAllister;
- the delay in the Residential Unit for Children with Autism in Inverness Royal Academy was of concern given the current revenue budget implications of an increase in out of authority placements;
- an update was requested on the Wick Academy and Inverness Royal Academy projects; and
- in relation to completing the Acharacle School project with a playing field, the collaboration with Community Services, who had been extending a burial ground locally, had enabled ground works to be completed, making best use of resources. An update on further progress was sought and an undertaking to keep local Members and the community informed was given, prior to an application being submitted to Sports Scotland.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the capital monitoring position to the end of November 2015 as set out in Appendix 1 and Section 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the current status of major projects as set out in Appendix 2 and Paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** that £200,000 of the approved funding in 2018/19 for the second phase of the refurbishment of Inverness Leisure be brought forward to 2016/17 to allow structural remedial works to be undertaken as described in Paragraph 2.3 of the report;
- iv. **APPROVED** the revised budget of £10.800m for Portree Gaelic Primary School with the additional £1.515m allocated from the Life Cycle Investment budget heading as outlined in Paragraph 2.4 of the report;
- v. **NOTED** the current position of the other projects referred to in Section 3 of the report;
- vi. **NOTED** the current position of the various School Statutory Consultations listed in Section 4 of the report; and
- vii. **AGREED** that detailed information be provided to Members of the Committee on the status of the Wick High School and Inverness Royal Academy projects and that the Committee be updated in a future report on implications for the Life Cycle Investment budget as a result of the additional expenditure on Portree Gaelic Primary School.

7. Dalwhinnie Primary School - Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure **Bun-sgoil Dhail Chuinnidh – Moladh Glusad gu Co-chomhairle Reachdail airson Dùnadh Foirmeil**

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/03/16 dated 7 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which explained that Dalwhinnie Primary School was currently mothballed and had been since the end of session 2011/12. The report sought agreement to proceed to a statutory consultation, under the Schools

(Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, for formal closure of the school. The appendices to the report had been circulated separately as Booklet A.

Having considered the report and the proposal contained in Booklet A, the Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation, per the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, regarding the proposal for formal closure of Dalwhinnie Primary School and the re-assignment of its catchment area to that of Newtonmore Primary School.

8. Management of Schools Update Cunntas às Ùr air Stiùireadh Sgoiltean

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/04/16 dated 11 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on progress on the management of schools programme.

In discussion, Members welcomed the progress being made with the management of the schools programme through its six inter-related workstreams. Members also welcomed the consultation undertaken and the significant additional support that would be provided to Head Teachers through the programme.

During further discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the lessons learned from the trials of the new arrangements and structures for the school office undertaken within the Ardnamurchan and Charleston ASGs;
- a query in relation to the 'management structures and school groupings' workstream and specifically whether the intention was to enable pupils to access subject specialisations at a different school within a grouping if that subject was not available within their individual school;
- the opportunities to undertake more work with partners in relation to recruitment;
- that the action being taken to encourage Parent Councils to participate in highlighting vacancies in their schools be welcomed;
- reference to the challenges associated with implementing the management of the schools programme across a range of schools which operated in different ways. In addition, the importance of electronic systems being operational as soon as possible to support its implementation was emphasised; and
- in regard to the 'curriculum delivery' workstream, the partnership approach should also extend to wider groups and faiths within the community to assist pupils to understand the world and different beliefs and cultures as referred to in the 'Responsible Citizen' capacity within the Curriculum for Excellence.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** progress on the management of schools programme; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the lessons learnt from the trials undertaken with regard to the new arrangements and structures for the school office.

9. Children's Services – Performance Report Seirbheisean Chloinne – Aithisg Coileanaidh

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/05/16 dated 7 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the performance framework for Children's Services.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to support the work ongoing to increase developmental checks for children, particularly in early years, to address the backlog which existed in some areas due to recruitment difficulties. Also, consideration needed to be given to the issues around parents who were declining or not responding to requests for such checks;
- while the performance measure to increase the number of children cycling and walking to school was welcomed, there was a need for more interaction between the Safer Routes to Schools Team and Police Scotland to improve road safety for children by, for example, the introduction of more speed limits and enforcement action being taken in relation to drivers exceeding existing speed limits;
- it was suggested that a relatively low target had been set in relation to performance measure 109: 'the percentage of parents and carers who respond positively to the question "the school takes my views into account" increases'; in response it was confirmed that this would be reviewed with a view to a higher target being set;
- the improving indicator in relation to the target set for performance measure 34: 'achieve 36% of new born babies exclusively breastfed at 6-8 week review March-17' was welcomed; and
- further information was sought as to the reasons performance measures 40, 41 and 42 around dental services were ragged as amber and red. This service was managed by NHS Highland who had also provided the figures so discussion would take place with the NHS representatives as to how this information could be provided.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the performance information; and
- ii. **AGREED** to review the target for performance measure 109: 'The percentage of parents and carers who respond positively to the question, "the school takes my views into account" increases'.

10. Children's Services – Assurance Report Seirbheisean Chloinne – Aithisg Barantais

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/06/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning, the purpose of which was to provide assurance to NHS Highland in relation to services commissioned and delivered through Highland Council. The content of each assurance report was informed by discussion at the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership and with the Child Health Commissioner.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the underspend on the allied professional budget and the implications for service delivery and specifically waiting times. The Chair confirmed that a report on this matter would be brought back to the next meeting of the Committee;
- further information was sought on the action being taken to recruit health visitors within Inverness West, particularly as this included areas of multiple deprivation. It was noted that the posts referred to in the report related to a planned increase in posts required to meet the projected future caseload as a result of additional funding received from the Scottish Government;
- albeit that the trainees were mainly qualified nurses, information was sought as to the number of health visitors posts covered by trainees, the associated impact on trainers and qualified health visitor staff and how this was being managed; and
- an explanation was sought for the ragging status of red shown against performance measure 42: the percentage of 5 year olds who will have no obvious dental decay will increase to 80%'; in response, the Chairman confirmed a report on this matter would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the issues raised in the report; and
- ii. that the format of the report remained under review.

11. Developmental Overviews Lèirmheasan Leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/07/16 dated 11 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which explained that, over the past three school sessions, Developmental Overviews had provided a format for the early identification of need within pre-school settings in Highland. These overviews had been created as a means of identifying when three and four years olds were having difficulty reaching the age-related levels expected on a developmental continuum across a number of domains. The report provided a summary of the use of the overviews and information about the initial findings.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and whether this was funded by the Scottish Government, the Head of Additional Support Needs undertook to provide specific costs to Councillor J Douglas;
- it would be helpful to receive information on the number, location and professional background of Early Years Practitioners in Highland;
- information was sought, and provided, on the recruitment of Educational Psychologists and parental involvement in the overviews;
- it would be useful to include feedback from parents on how children were progressing with particular skills at home;
- a full and accurate overview of each child entering P1 was critical and Members welcomed the continuing focus on early years as well as the individualised approach being taken;
- it was questioned whether the various strands of professional expertise within the Service, such as childcare staff and health visitors, were being brought together to the fullest extent possible;

- referring to personal experience, the overviews worked exactly as described in the report and Members commended the work being undertaken;
- with regard to the effect of deprivation on developmental milestones, unless positive radical action was taken the situation would persist. It was necessary to get buy-in from the Community Planning Partnership, allocate additional money to address poverty and use the data from the overviews to target resources and make a difference. In addition, the data could be used to quantify the added value of different services in deprived areas;
- the overviews were accessible and could be used by anyone with concerns about a child's development;
- NHS Highland were keen to work with the Council in terms of looking at the various stages of a child's growth and development over time and the added value that different health professionals and systems were providing. In addition, there was an opportunity to collaborate with academic partners who had expertise in this field;
- rural deprivation was significantly understated in the current statistics and it was necessary to focus on people living in remote rural areas who were deprived as a result of the cost of living there;
- it was important that children were assessed adequately and appropriate support put in place and Members emphasised the need for joint work in that regard;
- in relation to non-attendance at child health reviews, it was essential to consider the rights of the child and Members cited the Dutch system where attendance was mandatory; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, in relation to whether the overviews provided assessment in Gaelic.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the extensive work undertaken to date in creating the Developmental Overviews and the supporting advice and information on appropriate interventions on the associated website;
- ii. **NOTED** the current profile of the children in Highland as they entered Primary 1 and the strategic developments directing improvement activity as a result of this information;
- iii. **AGREED** to support the developmental approach being taken in Highland from pre-birth through to formal education, which was individualised to meet the needs of children. This was predicated on a sound evidence base but was unique to Highland and not an approach being taken nationally; and
- iv. **AGREED** that information on the number, location and professional background of Early Years Practitioners in Highland be circulated to Members of the Committee.

12. Standards and Quality Report Aithisg Inbhean agus Càileachd

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/08/16 dated 12 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided a summary overview of Standards and Quality in Highland Primary and Secondary Schools and identified areas for improvement across the service.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- reports on local Associated School Groups at Area Committees would be useful;
- the significant increase in the number of Duke of Edinburgh Awards was welcomed and confirmation was sought as to whether this was attributable to Culloden Academy, which had seen a remarkable increase in numbers;
- the increase in the total number of positive destinations was welcomed;
- in relation to exam results, disappointment was expressed that the percentage of pupils achieving awards appeared to be static or decreasing, particularly in S4. In previous years, the figures for Highland had been higher than the virtual comparator and national figures and Members questioned whether there was any specific reason for the decline;
- with regard to the secondary school pupil questionnaire (Q8 and Q10) and parent questionnaire (Q10 and Q11), information was sought on the reason for the low percentage of positive responses. In relation to the parent questionnaire in particular, there were a lot of interactions with schools that parents would view positively and it was a matter of how questions were presented. In addition, it was necessary to focus on the hard to reach groups who were not engaging with the questionnaire process and explore the barriers to participation;
- in relation to deprivation, it was possible to put some measures in place to improve attainment but this was not a sustainable way of addressing the issue in a time of diminishing resources. Unless there was a seismic change in the environment young people were growing up in, the situation would persist. A revolutionary approach was necessary and to shift resources in to early years and to address poverty;
- whilst recognising the Council's investment in Looked After Children, concern was expressed regarding their performance and information was sought on what could be done to address this. The performance data was important from an inequalities perspective and it would be helpful to examine it in greater depth, possibly pooling several years if the small numbers involved were an issue. In response, the Chairman suggested that a report on the issues surrounding attainment/achievement by Looked After Children be presented to a future meeting of the Committee;
- the Council and Government were putting a lot of emphasis on developing the young workforce and Members questioned whether any progress had been made in relation to the provision of Foundation Apprenticeships;
- with regard to Eco Awards, a nursery in Caithness had recently gained a Green Flag and Members asked whether this would be included in the statistics;
- concern was expressed that pupils with caring responsibilities or disabilities felt less listened to in their school and information was sought on what could be done to address that;
- the importance of out-of-class activities to Curriculum for Excellence was emphasised and information was sought on the reasons for the low numbers taking part and what could be done to improve participation;
- in relation to 1+2 languages, Members welcomed the progress that had been made. However, concern was expressed regarding the long term decline of modern languages and reference was made to research which indicated that the number of candidates studying and passing languages such as French, German and Mandarin had plummeted in recent years. Embassies around the world wanted graduates with language qualifications and, with over 300,000 Scottish jobs linked to EU membership, the ability to speak other languages was key. 1+2 languages would only succeed if pupils had proper access to modern languages in secondary schools and a joined-up approach between primary and secondary schools was essential. It was necessary to understand whether the situation in

Highland mirrored what was happening elsewhere in Scotland or bucked the trend. In that regard, it was requested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the delivery of modern languages in Highland secondary schools including the languages available and being chosen by pupils, the numbers studying and passing exams and a comparison with national trends;

- the Youth Convener provided an update on work underway in relation to pupil engagement, including exploration of options such as panel debates in schools and consultation through the Highland Youth Parliament. Pupil Councils were a good idea but varied in quality and output and were often seen as tokenistic. There was a need for regular meetings, support for their members to make change and accountability in terms of the school feeding back to its pupils and genuinely investing in young people's opinions; and
- young people with disabilities were often lonely, particularly when they left the education system, and Members needed to be active in their local communities and take a pragmatic, caring and nurturing approach. An informal cross-party meeting was suggested and the Chair confirmed that he was happy to have a discussion in that regard.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the contents of the Standards and Quality Summary Report 2014-2015;
- AGREED** that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee on the delivery of modern languages in Highland secondary schools including the languages available and being chosen by pupils, the numbers studying and passing exams and a comparison with national trends; and
- AGREED** that a report on the issues surrounding attainment/achievement by Looked After Children be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

13. "Face up to Child Poverty" Report Aithisg "Dèilig le Bochdainn Chloinne"

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/09/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which introduced a report published by the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) with advice to its members in schools and colleges, on how to 'poverty-proof' learning and teaching in the classroom.

At this stage the Chair thanked the outgoing Secretary of EIS Highland, Mr B Colman, for his contribution and welcomed his successor, Ms C McCombie, who introduced the EIS report and sought the support of Members in promoting it.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the report was the third in a trilogy of reports relating to poverty and Members reiterated the points made under items 12 and 13. It was suggested that there was a need for a Council poverty strategy that drew child, adult and pensioner poverty together. It was necessary to use funds in a different way to address the situation or the cycle of poverty would continue;
- it was important to dispel the myth that poverty only affected those on benefits. Often the people at the greatest risk of poverty were those on the living wage who did not qualify for benefits, free school meals etc;
- concern was expressed that school initiatives such as non-uniform and fundraising days added to the pressure on low-income families;

- parents' worries about not being able to feed their family transferred to children and led to a downward spiral of disengagement at school, poor performance and loss of confidence;
- the statistics on poverty and the use of food banks were shocking and concern was expressed regarding anecdotal evidence of children stealing food from other children in school;
- poverty also affected children's social life and children were more likely to be bullied if they came from a poorer background; and
- the Youth Convener highlighted the work of Youth Development Officers, who had a mandate to work with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and sometimes provided meals at youth groups. In addition, reference was made to schemes such as the Cook Well programme in Fortrose, where young people could cook for themselves if they were not getting a proper meal at home.

Drawing discussion to a close, the Chair concurred with the points raised and suggested that consideration be given, as a Council, to how to address poverty in Highland.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the issues raised in the report; and
- * ii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council that consideration be given to how to address poverty in Highland.

14. UNICEF Baby Friendly Initiative Iomairt Bàidheil ri Leanabain aig UNICEF

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/10/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update in relation to the positive outcome of the re-accreditation process for the UNICEF baby friendly initiative in Highland and highlighted excellent joint working by NHS and Council staff.

Having commended the Infant Feeding Advisor for her efforts, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and welcomed the ongoing UNICEF/WHO Baby Friendly Initiative Award.

At this stage, the meeting adjourned for lunch and resumed at 1.30 pm.

15. Self Directed Support for Children and Young People Taic Fèin-stiùiridh do Chloinn is Dhaoine Òga

Declaration of Interest: Mr W MacKay declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chairman of the Caithness branch of ENABLE and who were users of Thor House but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/11/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which set out a summary of proposed changes in order to support the implementation of improved choice and access to Self-Directed Support (SDS) for children and young people with a disability or complex health needs.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to officers in relation to the two SDS workshops that had taken place and it was suggested that the information leaflet which had been circulated be made available on the Council's website;
- SDS had great potential in that people had more choice of services. However, it was often the most vulnerable people that had to manage SDS and having to make a choice could be worrying;
- in relation to the proposed brokerage service, concern was expressed regarding the rigidity of the procurement process and the importance of consulting Highland Children's Forum and service users on the service specification was emphasised. Flexibility to meet a range of needs was key and it was important to appoint a local company that was familiar with the market in Highland. In addition, the service should not be too costly or complicated. Some Members suggested that it would be cheaper and more effective to provide an in-house service and that consideration of the brokerage service be deferred to allow it to be examined in more depth. It was proposed that an analysis be provided of an in-house service, a procured service and a shared service with Moray Council or another local authority;
- many of the families who accessed services at Thor House had substantial needs and the importance of providing weekend respite when it was required was emphasised. In relation to the proposed eight weekends per annum, an assurance was sought that this was for all levels of need. Officers had protected service users at either end of the spectrum but the needs of families in the mid-range were also crucial and it was essential to support them and consider the impact on the healthy development of the other children in the family. The success of the transition to SDS hinged on the development of viable options and concern was expressed that these were limited in Caithness and Sutherland. The priority had to be to support parents to continue to care for their children and it was necessary to explore new and imaginative ways to do so;
- Members supported the proposal that the true cost of services be introduced when calculating Support Plans;
- referring to personal experience of managing a SDS package, appreciation was expressed in relation to the value, flexibility, choice and efficiency of SDS. In addition, the staff were efficient and, most importantly, caring. In relation to brokerage, many people would not be able to manage it themselves but might have a trusted friend or family member who could undertake it for them;
- it was important to recognise that what helped one person might not be so helpful for another;
- loneliness was magnified in remote and rural areas and concern was expressed that, even with an SDS package, people would not be able to access alternative respite services; and
- as the number of families with assessed need increased, Members questioned whether there would come a point when structural budgets had to be examined.

Responding to the issues raised, the Chair confirmed that Thor House staff and service users had been fully consulted on the proposals and those discussions formed the basis of the report. Taking into account Members' comments on the proposed brokerage service, he proposed that consideration be deferred and that a detailed report be presented to the Committee on 17 March 2016.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. that residential respite be reconfigured;
- ii. that the Resource Allocation System be reconfigured;
- iii. that the true cost of services be introduced when calculating Support Plans;
- iv. that the timescale for implementation be three years; and
- v. to defer consideration of the proposed brokerage service and that a report in that regard be presented to the Committee on 17 March 2016.

16. Kinship Care: Update on Policy Cùram Càirdeis: Cunntas às ùr air Poileasaidh

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau where kinship carers were provided with advice on their rights and responsibilities but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/12/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which was a further update to the report provided to the Committee in August 2015 on the policy on Kinship Care and the allocation and distribution of funding. This was following national changes as a result of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 - Part 13. The Scottish Government had not yet issued guidance in respect of Part 13 but a letter to Chief Executives provided information in relation to intended changes.

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information in relation to kinship care and **AGREED:-**

- i. that carers of eligible children in the current financial year would have their payments backdated to 1 October 2015;
- ii. that payments for children who were looked after would continue for as long as the child was looked after;
- iii. that children who were subject to a Kinship Care Order as outlined in section 2.7 of the report would continue to receive an allowance until the child was 16 years old or until their 18th birthday if they remained in full time education; and
- iv. support for carers of looked after children to pursue a residence order, if appropriate, up to a maximum of £1,500 for uncontested cases and £3,000 for contested cases.

17. Education (Scotland) Bill Bile an Fhoghlaim (Alba)

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/13/16 dated 11 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on progress on the various elements of the Education (Scotland) Bill, currently going through the Scottish Parliament.

The Chairman informed Members that a Parliamentary Debate at Stage 3 of the Bill was now scheduled to take place on 3 February 2016, not 28 January as detailed in the report. Continuing, he expressed concern as to how the additional teaching hours required in Primary Schools, estimated to cost up to £2m in Highland, and the

implications that the Bill would have for Gaelic Medium Education, particularly in terms of staffing, would be addressed.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

18. Parental Engagement Strategy Ro-innleachd Rèiteachaidh Pharant

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/14/16 dated 11 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which set out the revised strategic approach in providing a supportive framework in which parents could engage meaningfully in the education of children and young people and in the ethos and life of Highland Council schools.

In discussion, the newly formed Highland Parent Council Partnership was highlighted, a Partnership which had been received well by Parent Councils who had found it a helpful and informative mechanism offering an opportunity to meet together and look at policy and services. Consequently, there was merit in considering how to engage more with the Partnership and to ensure all Parent Councils were involved. There were already other good examples already of strengthening engagement with parents, the pilot parent reporting system and the electronic booking system for parent evenings being cited as good examples.

The Committee **NOTED** and **AGREED** to support the development of the revised strategic approach.

19. Highland Lifestyle Survey 2015 Suirbhidh Dòigh-beatha air Ghàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No ECAS/15/16 dated 8 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which explained that the Highland Lifestyle Survey had been carried out with P7, S2 and S4 pupils in 2009, 2011, 2013. The questions had been revised for the 2015 Survey and access to it extended to cover a six week period. The report summarised the key findings of the 2015 Survey and, where possible, longitudinal comparison across all four surveys and the Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey had been included.

Although the Survey's return rate (51%) was disappointing, Members welcomed the positive responses received as to how young people felt about their life most of the time. It was suggested, however, that when preparing the next survey consideration be given to ensure it was representative of all communities and groups and that wording be adapted to take into account some children came from single parent households, were LGBT and/or had same sex parents.

The Committee **NOTED** the findings of the 2015 Highland Lifestyle Survey.

20. Community Justice Governance Riaghladh Ceartas Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated separately Report No ECAS/16/16 dated 13 January 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on progress in relation

to the redesign of Community Justice in Scotland, transition arrangements and plans for future governance of Community Justice in Highland.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to the arrangements outlined in the report for the formation of the Community Justice Partnership; and
- * ii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council that six Members be identified by the Appointment Panel External Bodies/ALEOs using a skills set scoring matrix.

21. Complaints Review Committee Outcome Toraidhean Comataidh Ath-sgrùdaidh nan Gearanan

There had been circulated joint Report No ECAS/17/16 dated 7 January 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive and the Director of Care and Learning which set out the findings and recommendations following a Complaints Review Committee held on 28 October 2015. The report also provided an overview of the complaints process and highlighted the requirement for decisions of the Complaints Review Committee to be reported to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. that the Complaints Review Committee met to consider the case, and the findings; and
- ii. the recommendations made by the Complaints Review Committee.

22. Membership of Sub-Committees Ballrachd Fho-chomataidhean

The Committee **AGREED** the following:-

- **Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

Mr S Fuller to replace Mr B Gormley
Mr D Fallows to replace Ms J Slater as Substitute

- **Criminal Justice Sub-Committee**

Ms K Stephen to replace Dr D Alston
Mr D Fallows to replace Ms J Slater

- **Culture and Leisure Contracts Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

Ms K Stephen to replace Dr D Alston
Mr S Fuller to replace Mr B Gormley
Mr D Fallows to replace Ms J Slater
Mr I Cockburn to replace Mr S Fuller as Substitute

23. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 25 August 2015;
- ii. **NOTED** Highland Child Protection Committee – 8 September 2015;
- iii. **NOTED** Annual General Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff – 6 November 2015;
- iv. **NOTED** Ordinary Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff – 6 November 2015;
- v. **APPROVED** Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 27 November 2014;
- vi. **APPROVED** Criminal Justice Sub-Committee – 2 December 2014 – subject to the correction of the spelling of Mr D Millar's name; and
- vii. **NOTED** FHC4 Leadership Group – 16 December 2015.

The meeting concluded at 2.50 pm.