

Agenda Item	15
Report No	RES/35/19

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Corporate Resources

Date: 28 August 2019

Report Title: Bun-Sgoil Shlèite – 1,140 hours Nursery Provision

Report By: Chief Executive and Director of Development and Infrastructure

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government has committed to increase the hours of free Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to 1,140 hours per year from August 2020. Work has been ongoing across Highland to review what this means for each area and individual school/nursery setting.
- 1.2 Bun-sgoil Shlèite is designated as a Gaelic school with an English Medium Class. Over the past year, a working group has considered a range of options for what new ELC provision could look like for Bun-sgoil Shlèite. There continue to be differences of opinion on the way forward for nursery provision from August 2020. Two options remain.
- Option 1** – Stand-alone new build nursery housing separate Gaelic nursery and English nursery rooms.
- Option 2** – Stand-alone new build Gaelic nursery and new English medium nursery located in adapted school house.
- 1.3 Following a public meeting in April and further meeting in July, parents and carers of children attending Bun-sgoil Shleite were surveyed on the two options during between 24 July and 9 August 2019. The report sets out the background on how to deliver 1140 hours for Bun-sgoil Shlèite, the feedback from the consultation and the proposed way forward. Having taken into account the feedback received from parents and carers, it is recommended that the greatest positive impact would be achieved from adopting option 1.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. Agree that Option 1 for a new build nursery unit to accommodate both the English and Gaelic Medium nurseries as outlined in 5.2 and 6.1 is taken forward as the preferred option.
- ii. Agree that £250,000 is allocated from the School Estate Investment Programme capital budget for the formation of a new car park and associated works along with minor improvements to the former school house now used as a classroom/teaching space.
- iii. Note that work will be undertaken with the Bun-Sgoil Shlèite community in order to improve community relations and seek greater collaboration.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The cost of implementing option 1 will be between £528,000 and £704,000 depending upon the capacity of the new build. As outlined in the report, this will be determined by the school roll projections which will be prioritised for Bun-Sgoil Shlèite. The report also recommends that £250,000 is allocated from the School Estate Investment Programme capital budget for the formation of a new car park and associated works including minor improvements to the former school house where English Medium pupils are taught.
- 3.2 **Legal** – The Council has a duty to provide education for all pupils under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. It also has a duty to promote inclusion. The statutory guidance issued by Bord Na Gaidhlig supports the principles of immersion whereby Gaelic as the sole language of learning teaching and assessment in the first 3 years of primary school. These principles will be respected by the adoption of Option 1.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – Screening for impacts has been undertaken. There are no specific equality implications as language is not a protected characteristic under the 2010 Equality Act. However, more broadly, the importance of promoting inclusion is a core Council duty and the Council has a wider role in terms of community relations. Option 1 is believed to support this broader approach. Screening for rural and island impacts highlights the importance of providing education for all within a rural community. Option 1 would support this approach.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – there are no specific implications.
- 3.5 **Risk** – relations within the Bun-Sgoil Shlèite community are tense and consultation informs that these are affecting families and children adversely. Failure to address this is likely to have a negative impact on the learning experience of young people.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – The Council has a duty to consider and take into account the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education prepared under section 9 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. In terms of para 3.2 above the principles set out in that guidance are adhered to in relation to Option 1.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has committed to increase the hours of free Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to 1,140 hours per year from August 2020. It has awarded the Council £32.59M of capital funding to support the expansion programme over four financial years from 2017-18 to 2020-21 inclusive. This amount will be allocated to investment in over 80 Council nursery settings, and the Council approved a report in June 2019 that set out a combined multi-year investment programme for the ELC expansion and School Estate Improvement. Some funding was kept in reserve for ELC settings where a final decision on the investment required had not been made, including Bun-Sgoil Shlèite.
- 4.2 The English Medium (EM) and Gaelic Medium (GM – known as Sgoil Àraich) nurseries at Bun-Sgoil Shlèite currently share a dilapidated modular building with the provision split between morning and afternoon sessions. From August 2020, both nurseries will need to operate full-day sessions and will not be able to deliver the increased hours from the limited space in the current building. Also, the building is in poor condition and does not have suitable accommodation necessary to fully support the expanded service and requires to be replaced as a priority.
- 4.3 A working group was established in 2018 following a meeting with the Board of Fàs Mòr (a Gaelic medium childcare facility situated at Sabhal Mòr Ostaig in Sleat), with Bord na Gàidhlig in attendance. It was agreed to have an independent chair and Councillor John Finlayson agreed to take on this role. The group comprised EM and GM primary and nursery parents, school staff, Council officials, community representatives and representatives from Fàs Mòr.
- 4.4 The group considered a range of issues with the following being the key matters.
- The possibility of Fàs Mòr being commissioned to provide an ELC service for 3 and 4-year-olds.
 - The nature and extent of improvements that would be required at the school to allow the expanded ELC service to be delivered, with a review of possible options.
 - The numbers of pupils in EM and the effect that a fall in numbers could have on staffing levels.
 - Other improvements to the school campus that could be prioritised for capital investment; the formation of a new car park and associated improvements to access paths and security; improvements to the former school house that was previously converted to form teaching space and other school accommodation; and improvements to the main school building.
- 4.5 After several meetings of the group, it was decided that the expanded ELC service would be provided by the school with Fàs Mòr providing wrap-around and holiday cover. A drop-in session was also held at the school in April to review two draft options for the improvements outlined above. Following a meeting of the group in May, a briefing paper with revised options was issued to all parents in June seeking feedback. This set out the following:
- A proposal to build a new nursery unit for Sgoil Àraich (as opposed to the alternative option to build a new unit to accommodate both nurseries).

- To extend the former school house to accommodate the EM nursery, which would take account of the possible requirement for an Early Level class in the future should pupil numbers fall.
- The benefits and outcomes of this approach and the need for flexibility and future-proofing.

4.6 Following a number of very concerning representations from parents and other members of the community, a further meeting was held at the school on 2nd July with local Members, staff and parents to discuss potential options for ELC provision from August 2020. This was also attended by the Chief Executive and Budget Leader. The meeting was productive, with a good opportunity for views to be shared. It was agreed that a consultation on the options would be held with parents over the subsequent weeks with a view to a decision on future provision being taken at this Committee meeting. The options under consideration were summarised as follows.

- **Option 1:** A new build nursery unit accommodating both Sgoil Àraich and the EM nursery, with shared toilets, kitchen and other facilities but separate free-flow play areas (based on a similar design layout currently being constructed at Ullapool Primary School).
- **Option 2:** A new build nursery unit accommodating Sgoil Àraich only, with an extension to the former school house for the EM nursery.

5. Outcome of Consultation

5.1 Parents and carers of children currently attending Bun-Sgoil Shlèite and Nursery were surveyed between 24 July and 9 August 2019. Of the 57 households with children attending the school, 33 (58%) responded.

- 8 were responses from households with children in English Medium
- 24 were response from households with children in Gaelic Medium
- 1 was a response from a household with children in both English and Gaelic Medium

Overall, this equates to the balance of English Medium and Gaelic Medium within the school.

5.2 Respondents were asked to indicate which of the two options they preferred:

- **12** households favoured **option 1**
- **20** households favoured **option 2**
- **1** household gave no overall preference but indicated support for **whatever option English Medium parents favoured** in the interests of school and community unity and helping them to feel included and valued.

5.3 When considering the responses based on the type of provision their children were receiving it was noted that:

- **All English Medium** households who responded **favoured option 1**.

Comments in support of this included:

- Encourages greater inclusion and the importance of fairness
- Allows English and Gaelic medium to have their own areas but less segregation
- Having two separate nurseries will make the divide in the school larger
- Equal perception of the options for children – equally promoting English

and Gaelic

- Avoids the option of an early years' class which we are not in favour of

- **19 of the 24 Gaelic Medium households** who responded **favoured option 2.**

Comments in support of this option included:

- Enables complete immersion in Gaelic which is important in early years
- Shared facilities would compromise complete immersion
- Better fits with the designation of the school as a Gaelic school
- Option 1 does not enable Gaelic immersion as English would take precedence
- Supports improved facilities, better use of the building and outdoor space for English medium nursery
- Enables retention of teacher for early years
- Will provide safer parking, access and options for outdoor play

- **4 out of the remaining Gaelic Medium households** responding **favoured option 1.** Comments in support of this option included:

- Better that they are together so that they can mix
- Full immersion can still be achieved but with the added benefit of coming together
- Support what will create a more harmonious atmosphere within the school community.
- Option 2 is so deeply unpopular among English medium parents that to choose it would risk a split within the overall school body. Option 1 is a compromise.

5.4 A decision of this nature is not straight forward when the two perspectives are so polarised in their outlook. Based purely on numbers, the majority of respondents would favour option 2. However, this does not take account that this view is held by only one group within the school community and who would benefit the most from this option. It is notable that no one from the group most impacted would support this option. It is also important to note that whilst option 2 has only received support from Gaelic Medium parents, option 1 has attracted broader support from both Gaelic and English Medium parents. A further point to highlight would be the rationale for supporting this option from Gaelic medium parents, is to support greater cohesion and collaboration within the school.

5.5 The Council must balance any decision it takes to ensure the greatest positive impact. Having taken into account the feedback received from parents and carers, it is recommended that the greatest positive impact would be achieved from adopting option 1. This is due to a number of reasons:

- This would achieve the greatest level of inclusion and ensure that all children equally benefit from the new provision and facilities.
- Gaelic immersion will still be achieved through option 1 however it will provide the opportunity for the children and parents to come together at appropriate times.
- As demonstrated at the public meeting and through the comments received as part of the survey, there is a significant divide in the current school community that is unlikely to be having a positive impact upon the children. Option 1 provides the opportunity to improve and repair community relations.

- The Council has a duty under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide education for all children. It also has a duty to promote inclusion. Option 1 provides the best opportunity to achieve this.

5.6 It is therefore recommended that option 1 is progressed for providing nursery education at Bun-Sgoil Shlèite as part of the roll out of the 1140 hours early years education programme.

6. Proposed Capital Investment

6.1 *ELC Expansion:*

The capacity of the two nursery rooms will be determined once the annual review of the 15-year school roll forecasts across Highland school has been undertaken. This exercise uses the enrolment figures for the new session along with the updated Housing Land Audit information across Highland that takes account of any changes in the delivery rates for new housing developments. The updated forecasts are usually published in November each year but the review of the figures for Bun-Sgoil Shlèite will be prioritised. However, based on the space and cost metric guidance published by the Scottish Futures Trust for the ELC expansion programme, the cost of providing registered capacity space in the new build would be approximately £22,000 per pupil. For example, the cost of a new build for a combined registered capacity of 24 would be approximately £528,000, while for a capacity of 32 it would be approximately £704,000. Comments were received as part of the consultation regarding the different proposed sizes of classroom for English and Gaelic Medium. The size of the classrooms will be based on the forecasted roles and demand; a standard approach adopted across all Highland schools. The final capacities will be carefully considered and will take account of the balance between EM and GM pupil numbers and the requirement for flexibility and future-proofing should that balance change at some point. As with the rest of the programme, alternative construction options will be considered to deliver the unit at a lower cost where possible while maintaining the required quality standards.

6.2 *School Estate Improvement:*

As outlined in 4.4, a range of potential improvements to the school campus that could be carried out in conjunction with the ELC works were highlighted by the Working Group. At this stage, it is recommended that investment is prioritised to form a new car park along with associated works to improve safety and security, with some additional funding allocated to carry minor improvements to the former school house. Feedback was received as part of the consultation that expressed concerns regarding the safety and layout of the new car park, the amount of green space it was likely to use and regarding the outdoor space for the two nurseries and whether it should be shared, separate or include a communal area. Once a decision has been reached on the option to progress, further work will be required with parents to explore concerns prior to progressing the new wider estate improvements. It is therefore recommended that £250,000 is allocated from the School Estate Improvement budget heading in the Care and Learning capital programme for these works.

7. Next Steps

7.1 It is imperative that all parties now work together to deliver the necessary improvements to the school campus. While the target of having the new nursery building operational for the start of the new session in 2020 is challenging, it is still achievable at this stage. However, contingency plans will be put in place to ensure that the expanded ELC service can still be provided in the event of the new build not being fully complete by the August 2020 deadline.

- 7.2 This process has highlighted the significant divide and very tense relationships that exist within the Bun-Sgoil Shlèite community. There is evidence in the consultation that these tensions are affecting families and children adversely and must be addressed. Moving forward, work must take place to help support greater collaboration, inclusion and the improvement of relations within the school community. This is essential to achieve a positive learning environment for all children within Bun-Sgoil Shlèite. Council officers will work with the head teacher and parent council to develop a programme of shared activity to support this process moving forward.

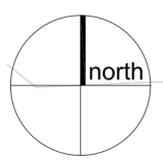
Designation: Chief Executive and Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 21 August 2019

Author: Robert Campbell, School Estates Manager
Alison Clark, Acting Head of Policy
Norma Young, Area Care and Learning Manager

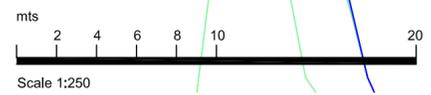
Appendix 1: Proposed plans for nursery provision at Bun-Sgoil Shlèite

Appendix 2: Summary of consultation feedback



Key :

Orange square	Classroom
Purple square	Toilets
Yellow square	Cloakroom/Lobby
Red square	Office/Staff Room
Light blue square	Kitchen
Light green square	Store
Dark green square	Plant Room



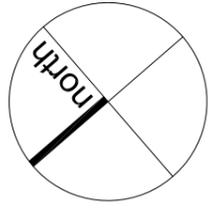
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DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE

CLIENT	Care & Learning	SCALE	1:250
PROJECT	Sleaf Primary School - Nursery Works	DATE	19.07.2019
CONTRACT	Robert Chandler	DRAWN BY	PH
DRAWING TITLE	New GM Nursery & Sch House Remodel - Site Plan	CHECKED BY	RC
PURPOSE OF ISSUE	Proposal Options	THICKNESS	A2

PROJECT NUMBER	ORIGINATOR	VOLUME OR SYSTEM	LEVEL AND LOCATION	TYPE	ROLE	CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER	REV
ECSBF0305	THC	ZZ	XX	DR	A	-	0002	-



Key :

■	Classroom
■	Toilets
■	Cloakroom/Lobby
■	Office/Staff Room
■	Kitchen
■	Store
■	Plant Room



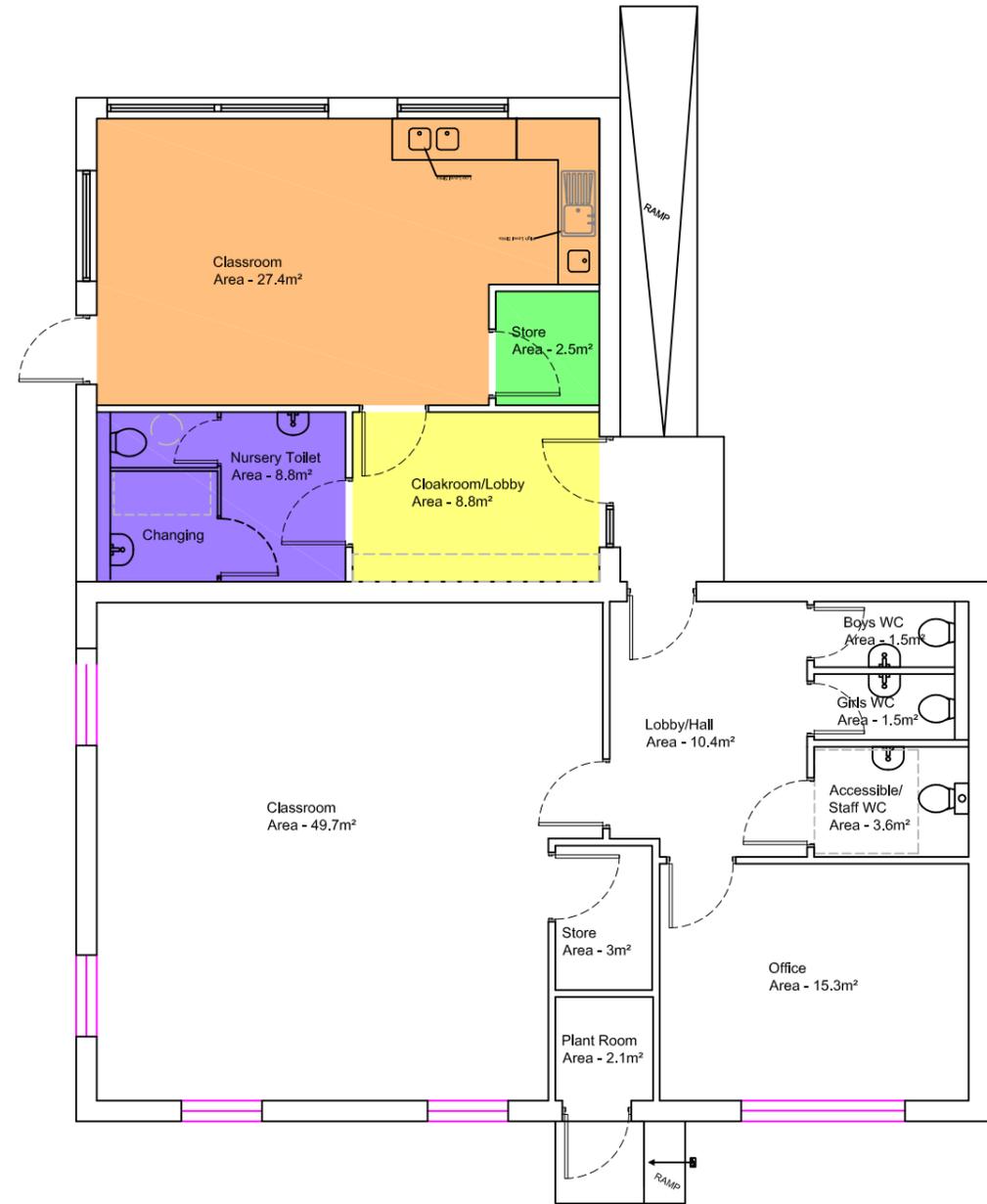
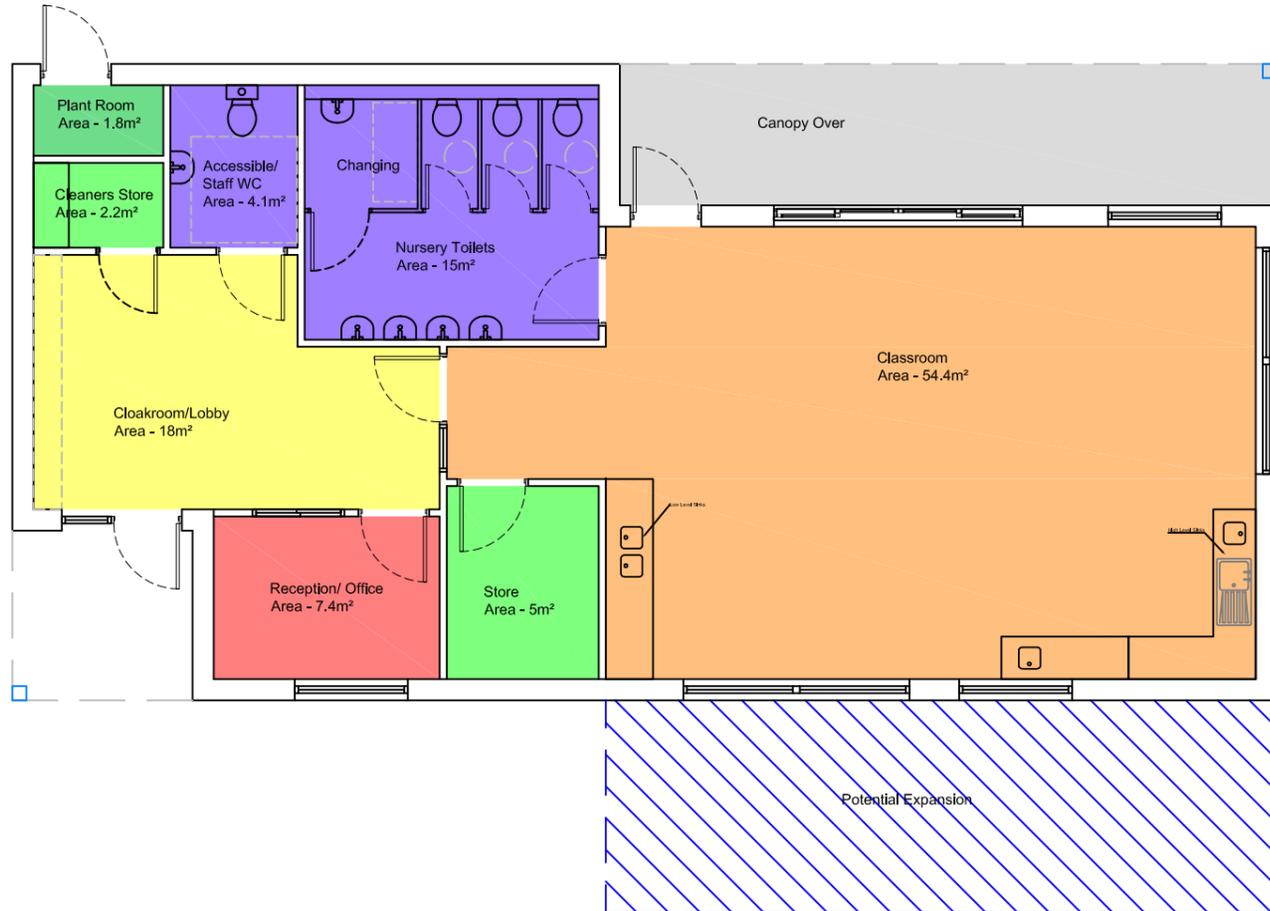
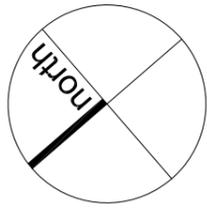
Scale 1:100



DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE

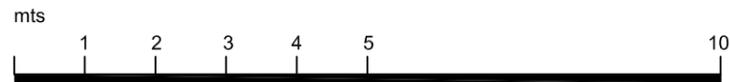
CLIENT	Care & Learning	SCALE	1:100
PROJECT	Sleat Primary School - Nursery Works	DATE	19.07.2019
CONTACT	Robert Chandler	DRAWN BY	PH
DRAWING TITLE	Combined GM & EM New Build Nursery - Floor Plan	CHECKED BY	RC
PURPOSE OF ISSUE	Proposal Options	PAPER SIZE	A3

PROJECT NUMBER	ORIGINATOR	VOLUME OR SYSTEM	LEVELS AND LOCATIONS	TYPE	ROLE	CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER	REV
ESCBF0305	THC	ZZ	XX	DR	A		0003	



Key :

- Classroom
- Toilets
- Cloakroom/Lobby
- Office/Staff Room
- Kitchen
- Store
- Plant Room



Scale 1:100



DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE

CLIENT	Care & Learning	SCALE	1:100
PROJECT	Sleat Primary School - Nursery Works	DATE	19.07.2019
CONTACT	Robert Chandler	DRAWN BY	PH
DRAWING TITLE	New GM Nursery & Sch House Remodel - Floor Plan	CHECKED BY	RC
PURPOSE OF ISSUE	Proposal Options	PAPER SIZE	A3

PROJECT NUMBER	ORIGINATOR	VOLUME OR SYSTEM	LEVELS AND LOCATIONS	TYPE	ROLE	CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER	REV
ESCBF0305	THC	ZZ	XX	DR	A		0004	

Bun-sgoil Shlèite – 1140 Nursery Provision Summary of Feedback

Under the 2014 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, three and four year olds and eligible 2 year olds were entitled to 600 hours of early learning and childcare provision. The Scottish Government has committed to increasing this entitlement to 1140 hours by 2020. Work has been ongoing across Highland to review what this means for each area and individual school/nursery setting.

Over the last year, a working group has considered a range of options for what this could look like for Bun-sgoil Shlèite. This has included considering the use of the existing building, the new demountable units and the potential for a new building in order to meet the needs of providing the increase in early year's provision. A core component of these considerations is the status of Bun-sgoil Shlèite as a designated Gaelic school with an English Medium Class.

There continue to be differences of opinion on the way forward for nursery provision from August 2020. Two options remain.

Option 1 – Stand-alone new build nursery housing separate Gaelic nursery and English nursery rooms.

Option 2 – Stand-alone new build Gaelic nursery and new English medium nursery located in adapted school house.

Parents and carers of children attending Bun-sgoil Shleite were surveyed on the two options during between 24 July and 9 August 2019.

The following summarises the feedback received through the survey.

33 households responded – **58% of all households** in the school

- 8 were responses from households with children in English Medium
- 24 were response from households with children in Gaelic Medium
- 1 was a response from a household with children in both English and Gaelic Medium

Overall, this equates to the balance of English Medium and Gaelic Medium within the school.

12 households favoured option 1

20 households favoured option 2

1 household gave no overall preference but indicated support for whatever option English Medium parents favoured in the interests of school and community unity and helping them to feel included and valued.

All English Medium households who responded favoured option 1

19 of the 24 Gaelic Medium households who responded favoured option 2

4 out of the remaining Gaelic Medium households responding favoured option 1

Comments

Comments in support of option 1 included:

- **Encourages greater inclusion**
 - Allows English and Gaelic medium to have their own areas but less segregation
 - Importance of fairness
 - It is more inclusive
 - Having two separate nurseries will make the divide in the school larger
 - Equal perception of the options for children – equally promoting English and Gaelic
- **Compromise**
 - Full immersion can still be achieved but still able to mix
 - Option 1 would be a compromise – Gaelic immersion is still important and needs to be achieved but option 2 is very unpopular and would create a split in the school
- **General**
 - Happy to go with whatever will create a more harmonious atmosphere within the school
 - Avoids the possibility of an early years' class which we don't want
 - Brings children together to develop friendships across the EM/GM divide

Comments in support of option 2 included:

- **Retains Complete Immersion**
 - Enables complete immersion in Gaelic which is important in early years – this needs to be the priority of Gaelic Medium
 - Need complete immersion at early years to allow active use of language and to develop relationships through the medium of Gaelic –

essential for Gaelic to feature in play, friendships and extra-curricular activity

- Full Gaelic immersion important as English-speaking family
 - Shared facilities would compromise complete immersion
 - Better fits with the designation of the school as a Gaelic school
 - The alternative is a bilingual option which doesn't deliver GM early years
 - As a designated Gaelic school this option gives Gaelic its place and respect
 - Option 1 does not enable Gaelic immersion as English would take precedence
- **Improved Facilities and Access**
 - Provides better facilities and outdoor space for English medium
 - Enables retention of a teacher for Early Years
 - Better adaptability of use of the building and flexible for future – ensures English block fit for the future
 - Better use of outdoor spaces
 - Adaption to school house will work better for an early year's class
 - Will provide safer parking, access and options for outdoor play
 - Makes sense to renovate the school house rather than leave it, this way everyone benefits

General Comments

Building

- Size of EM should be more in line with GM to enable growth
- Previous proposal provided much higher quality of space for EM for nursery and early years.

Garden/play space

- Should have two separate gardens and a communal one
- Don't need separate play areas
- Quality of outdoor space will remain a priority
- Car park proposed takes up a lot of playground area

Car Parking/Entrance Areas

- Need for a new safer entrance for cars and pedestrians
- Concern re EM entrance as right beside car park
- Need to think about parents that queue up to collect and help children to dress – main door currently opens onto car park
- No need to have separate entrances – if sharing a lobby then can share a door

General

- Council needs to make a professional judgement on what proposal is closely aligned to Gaelic Medium policy and greatest flexibility for future use
- Educators should be reassuring parents that their child will do well in whatever medium they choose
- Lot of issues in the school are historic segregation – there is a need to move forwards

Differing views on the current position:

“Understand English Medium parents but it is a Gaelic Medium school with an English department – it is not a bilingual school.”

“We must find a way to promote Gaelic medium that does not come above the inclusion of the EM classes in BSS.”

“Council is delivering obligations in terms of English Medium but not for Gaelic Medium and this is being compromised by demands of others. Highland Council needs to protect and support the school's special status.”

“Option 2 talks about opportunities but the purported advantages are nothing compared to the inclusivity and positive equality nature of option 1.”
