

Agenda Item	3B.
Report No	EDU 10B/20

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee **Education**

Date: **6 August 2020**

Report Title: **Return to School (B) – Schools Reopening 12 August**

Report By: **Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report advises Members of the content of the latest Educational Continuity Direction issued by the First Minister on 30 July 2020, and its implications for the provision of a full return to schools and learning provisions for Highland children and young people. The latest Scottish Government guidance is available here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-preparing-start-new-school-term-august-2020/>
- 1.2 The most recent schools reopening national level determination requires Education Authorities to plan and prepare for children to resume attendance at schools from 12 August onwards, in a locally determined phased approach, but no later for all pupils than the 18 August.
- 1.3 It should be noted and expected that guidance on outbreaks and the Council's response with partners will remain a key resilience matter throughout school session 2020/2021. It should be noted further that there will continue to be the need for agility and support, as schools operate within the continued risks associated with the Covid 19 presence in our 'new normal'. The most up to date information regarding the Highland Council area schools reopening programme can be found via the link: www.highland.gov.uk/backtoschool

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. note the context as set out within the report, and latest Scottish Government Direction regarding Education provision and return to school;
 - ii. agree that the opportunity to return to school will be in place for all Highland children by 18 August 2020; and

- iii. note the ongoing additional support and infrastructure provided by partners and central Council services, will require ongoing review as children and young people are educated in school settings from August onwards.

3. Implications

3.1 Resources

- 3.1.1 The Scottish Government formally announced on the 23 July that an additional £20 million would be made available nationally across the nation's 32 LA areas with a focus on school transport, cleaning and other Covid related logistical issues. The Highland Council's anticipated share of this based on previous formula allocation will be approximately £1 million. In addition to this it has been proposed that there will be an additional allocation of funding, to support the recruitment of additional staffing decided at a local level. At the time of writing the Council are still awaiting the formal grant notification due from the Scottish Government, to enable required operational activity to be progressed.
- 3.1.2 Initial estimates of costs were included in the financial return issued to COSLA at the end of June. The latest estimate of costs as reported to Education Committee on the 2 July is £11.626 million. This assessment was based on local schools working to the currently advised plan A option of 100% return of learners, returning to 100% of schools from 12 August onwards. Plans and financial estimates are now being adjusted and prepared following the guidance issued by Government on the 30 July. Finalised plans and estimates will be informed by the pending and still outstanding formal grant notifications from the Scottish Government in support of recent funding announcements.
- 3.1.3 Once the details from the aforementioned Scottish Government's announcement are confirmed in the form of a formal grant notification, it is the Council's intention to target any additional resources received towards learner numeracy, literacy, health and wellbeing and the closing the attainment gap, and officers have started planning on this basis. Education Service Officers will be working with local Head Teachers to establish the most effective and targeted way to deploy any additionally made available resources. Once funding has been formally allocated to the Council we will be in a position to take forward additional staffing requirements as soon as final decisions are made.
- 3.1.4 The Council's Cleaning & Facilities Management (FM) Service are working in partnership with all schools to adjust cleaning provision in response to the First Ministers announcement on the 30 July. Ahead of the detail being confirmed by Scottish Government, any additional funding specifically for supporting cleaning and FM personnel will be welcomed and deployed on enhanced cleaning. The ability of the service to manage even pre-Covid standards of cleansing as a result at the present pressures, has been reported several times verbally and in writing in the context that any extra and/or enhanced cleansing for schools and educational settings will require additional resource.
- 3.1.5 A key challenge for the local transport system for schools is that the Highland Council's school transport programme is combined with local public transport routes, and as part of the Covid-19 suppression strategy, passengers on public transport are currently required to adhere to 1m physical distancing measures. This reduces the capacity of vehicles and the Council are currently working on the detailed implications

of the reduced capacity in terms of how best to transport children to school and simultaneously maintain local public bus services. The latter are of course an important social service for those living in our smaller communities. Any additional funding for transport will assist the Highland Council in covering these extra costs. For information the Council are examining the fitment of protective screens, and any additional funding would also assist with this.

- 3.2 Legal: As already referenced in this paper, following the recent national determination pertaining to schools reopening in August, all local authority areas are required to work with local area schools, settings and facilities management staff to make the necessary arrangements for provision to formally reopen by the 18 August.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural): The reopening of schools and ELC settings in August will impact on local infrastructure, whilst enabling the return to work of the parents of children and young people scheduled to return to learning. Key interdependencies such as transport are being evaluated by the work of the recently commissioned transport sub group, with outcomes reported to the work of the schools reopening Programme Board for governance and oversight purposes. The approach being taken, is to delegate planning and implementation to the local level, within an over-arching framework, recognising a one size fits all solution is not possible nor appropriate in a Highland context. This will mean there could be local level variations in service delivery.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever: The recommendations outlined within this report could have a neutral, or potentially positive impact.
- 3.5 Risk: A sudden recrudescence of the Covid-19 outbreak could result in a postponement of the re-opening of schools, and a consequent Direction from Ministers to continue with the provision of key worker childcare.
- 3.6 Gaelic: No specific implications to highlight.
- 3.7 ASN: Children with additional needs will be supported by their respective schools with forms of targeted support in response to assessed needs. Targeted approaches will be deployed where required to ensure bespoke support for children who are unable to return to school in response to identified needs.

4. Schools Reopening Programme Board - Updates

- 4.1 At the time of writing (29 July) the headlines below are the most up to date key messages for the work of the Schools Reopening Programme Board Sub Groups. The work of this programme and associated resource implications will need to be kept under constant review over the coming months to minimise the potential for any risk and slippage.

Ref	PMO Sub Group Focus	Headline key messages/ updates
1	Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of active travel plans continuing for children. • Some contract terminations have been received from providers and others may follow. Intensive work in progress to renegotiate or re-procure.

Ref	PMO Sub Group Focus	Headline key messages/ updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision taken that face coverings will not be required on dedicated school transport. Government advice is that social distancing is not required between pupils on dedicated school transport.
2	Catering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions scheduled with kitchen staff to ensure they are comfortable and confident in adopting new procedures. Menus finalised and pre-ordering slip templates are being amended to reflect. Food orders placed and staff actively pursuing limited number of sites where no orders have been placed. Deliverable options for free school meal vouchers/meal provision currently being worked on. FSM will be provided the week of the 11 -18 August
3	IT/ICTiL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request submitted for additional 4500 Chromebooks to extend 1:1 model and support additionality required due r to support families with no internet connectivity. Pupil device refresh will be complete by August. Staff programme complete by October. Communication meeting with Highland Council Parent Partnership representatives scheduled for w/c 27 July.
4	Property and Facilities Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water inspection and sampling completed in 170 sites so far, 5 partial completions, 12 more primaries to be completed. Banners and signage ordered. Screens (food till area) and food trolleys to distribute lunches to classrooms to be ordered. Cleaning posts advertised to fill current vacancies. Additional summer holiday clean has commenced (existing cleaning and FM staff). Communication to be issued regarding school lets not resuming until schools fully operational and government guidance confirms school lets can recommence.
5	People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ELC recruitment to ensure current provision is maintained is being taken forward at SLT.

Ref	PMO Sub Group Focus	Headline key messages/ updates
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully recruited to all primary teaching posts, outstanding secondary posts will go to additional advert early August.
6	Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media briefing to highlight our careful and gradual approach to the return to education in Highland. • 'Back to School' webpage launched including FAQs. • Parental letter distributed • Head Teachers to confirm return of school via individual school letters • Communications process for education communications established. • Responses to media enquiries and issue of press releases (ongoing) <p>www.highland.gov.uk/backtoschool</p>
7	Early Learning and Care (ELC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Announcement expected 30 July which will relax social distancing measures and a full return to ELC settings. • ELC FAQs circulated to HC staff and partners and on back to school webpage. • Template parent letter re hours offered circulated to HC staff and partners. • Communication released re 1140 position.
8	Area Focus Groups x4 – North, Mid, West and South areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible and Agile - 203 Schools, 203 Risk Assessments, 203 Operational Plans • Options A – C... Focus on 100% learner return and reopening in August • Scottish Government Education (HMIE) endorsement of Highland Schools Reopening Plan • Meetings with Parent Council Partnerships • Community Interest Group meetings/ Consultation

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning

Date: 3 August 2020

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Background Papers:

1. Strategic Framework for Schools Reopening

- [2. Schools Reopening PMO overview](#)
- [3. Common Schools and settings reopening action plan template](#)
- [4. Highland Council Schools Reopening Overview Plan](#)
- [5. Coronavirus \(Covid-19\): Guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020](#)