

The Highland Council

Minutes of the **Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers** held remotely on Wednesday 16 June 2021 at 3.00 pm.

Present:

Representing the Management Side:

Mrs M Cockburn
Mr J Finlayson
Mr T Heggie
Mr G MacKenzie

Representing the Teachers' Side

Ms C Fraser (SSTA)
Ms C McCombie (EIS)
Mr L Mackenzie (EIS)
Mr S Tillman (EIS)

Also present as observers:

Ms E Knox, Management Side
Ms G Warburton, Teachers' Side

In attendance:

Mr A Bell, Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side
Ms N Grant, Joint Secretary, Management Side/Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager
Ms R Bell, Policy Officer
Ms F Grant, Strategic Lead, Secondary Schools
Ms A Jansson, Strategic Lead, Primary Schools and Early Learning and Childcare
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator
Ms O Bayon, Committee Officer

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray, Mr S Mackie and Mr M Reiss.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 13 November 2019

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 13 November 2019, recognising that there had been no LNCT Meeting apart from the AGM in 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

4. Work Plan Review 2019/20

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/01/21 dated 2 June 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

Prior to consideration, it was reported that the Teachers' side had requested amendments to LNCT 35 Policy and Guidance on Professional Review and Development for Teachers as follows:-

Paragraph 3.1

Previous wording was:

- Schools must be prepared and ready to engage in the process (See Appendix on 'Readiness for PRD').

To be amended to:

- Schools must be prepared and ready to engage in the process. See [Sharepoint Site Resources](#)

Paragraph 5.9.1

Previous wording was:

When teachers indicate that they want to go onto the supply register at the point of retiring there is an expectation that their PU year is brought forward.

To be amended to:

Para 5.9.2 When teachers indicate that they want to go onto the supply register at the point of retiring there is an option for their PU year to be brought forward.

During discussion, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, made the following points:-

- Appreciation was expressed for the collaborative way agreements 35 and 37 had been arrived at;
- the Teachers' Side saw Health and Wellbeing as key to moving forward. The last 18 months have been filled with uncertainty and anxiety, with progress in all areas impacted severely. To recover to best capacity would require the 'foundation' steps to be both carefully chosen and managed if school communities were not to be let down. Ethos and relationships were vital areas within any such recovery curriculum and careful attention would need to be paid to workload management and assurance was sought that staff would be reminded of the 'Workload Control Agreement'. This management approach had to come from all levels and school leaders needed to be aware of what staff were doing to ensure that they were not doing too much;
- Highland Council had been viewed as an example of good practice when it came to digital provision and support and the work surrounding this needed to be recognised;
- Addition Support Needs (ASN) was an area that had seen massive changes over the last few years and, following the publication of the Scottish Government's Additional Support for Learning Plan, there would

be great work to come both nationally and locally, including training of currently registered teachers, possible new qualifications in ASN, enhancement of initial teacher education courses etc. Again, the Joint Secretary of the Teachers' Side asked that any work associated with this for staff employed in schools did not negatively impact their workloads and would be managed appropriately; and

- the move to 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare had just been completed and would take time to bed in. Quality nursery provision was vital as a foundation for a successful educational journey for children and it was acknowledged that there was a right to access a qualified teacher. However, under the current Early Years Education Support Officer model, this would give 818 nursery pupils per qualified teacher. It was acknowledged that there were some settings with an early years class which consequently allowed greater access and that some schools had ad hoc arrangements where a Primary Teacher spent time within the nursery setting, but these were not the norm and might not necessarily be appropriate.

The Chair having acknowledged the points raised, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position in respect of:
 - a. National Improvement Framework;
 - b. Improvement Agenda;
 - c. ASN Transformation Project;
 - d. Early Years and Childcare;
 - e. Whole School Job-Sizing Reviews/ Principal Teacher Entitlement Reviews;
 - f. Review of LNCT Agreements; and
- ii. **APPROVED:**
 - a. LNCT 35 Policy and Guidance on Professional Review and Development for Teachers, as set out at Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendments detailed; and
 - b. LNCT 37 Special Leave Policy for Teaching Staff, as set out at Appendix 2 of the report.

5. **Work Plan 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No LNCT/02/21 dated 2 June 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the Joint Secretary, Teachers' Side, made the following points:-

- there was an ongoing need to manage workload at all levels and a request was made that this be added to the workplan;
- it was important how work was approached and that it was structured in such a way so not to bring about unnecessary tasks, paperwork etc. All things needed to have value and be valued;
- attainment should not be seen as the 'starting point' or main driver as this would hamper recovery and would have the opposite effect to that which was hoped;

- the Devolved School Management review was a massive and complex piece of work and, whilst it was acknowledged that there was no more money available, the schedule in place was out of date and unfit for purpose;
- the secondary staffing formula was also out of date and put Highland Council at the bottom of the league table with regards to teacher numbers in schools when put beside comparator Authorities. If this continued, Highland Council would become one of the worst within the UK and therefore it was questioned if Highland's children and young adults were being given the best opportunity. Not only did this impact pupils but, as a result of larger class sizes and marginalisation of subjects, it impacted on staff workload, the management time for promoted post holders and the stress levels of all involved;
- the Teachers' Side had asked for the 'Diversity in Education' item to be included as it referred to a plan whose timescale had ended and there was nothing yet in its place. It was unlikely, given current circumstances, that this could be completed within the session but it would be a project to approach carefully to ensure that the end piece of work was sound and could be considered as an example of best practice;
- safeguarding children and young adults was key. However, it was questioned if a review of the roles and responsibilities of Guidance/Pastoral staff was needed when taking into consideration growing caseloads, requirement for subject teaching, management time etc. If there was a training requirement then this needed to be facilitated using existing in-service days or within Career Long Professional Learning as a part of an individual's Professional Review and Development process. It should not form part of the Working Time Agreement activity as this time would be best spent on the direct needs of the school and its staff and it was hoped early discussion would take place to determine how this would be taken forward and how it had been time costed for the year ahead;
- there was some confusion about the slightly contradictory reference to halting further reviews whilst then asking for them as part of budgetary savings and it was questioned if the halting was a reference to secondary settings, with the primary review being the one which was to be looked at over next session;
- the final sentence of the Whole School Job-sizing Review could be misleading as criteria existed to be met to trigger a re-sizing and the annual process referred to would likely be looking at such criteria, rather than actual re-sizing. LNCT 3 was currently in place which covered the secondary setting so discussion would be welcomed on an agreeable process for the handling of the primary setting;
- LNCT 4 was unlikely to be overtaken in the timescale suggested due to significant alteration within corporate documents;
- LNCT 5 had been highlighted by the Teachers' Side and initial wording considered;
- LNCT 13 was likely to be overtaken soon due to it being a simple swap of relevant wording;
- LNCT 16 was key going forward but the timescale was overambitious and the fact that LNCT 23 was key and therefore likely to dominate the first part of the year;
- concern was expressed at the recent comments by the Deputy First Minister regarding the use of temporary contracts. LNCT 24 was in place covering the use of such contracts and was a perfectly workable

agreement. However the lack of adherence to its wording was questioned and therefore a request was made to add a review of this agreement to the workplan due to significant concern.

The Chair having acknowledged the points raised, the Committee **NOTED** the position in respect of:

- a. Education and Learning Action Plan 2021/22;
- b. Devolved School Management Review;
- c. Improving Diversity in Education;
- d. Safeguarding;
- e. Whole School Job-sizing Reviews/ PT Entitlement Reviews; and
- f. Review of LNCT Agreements.

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to express the Management's Side's appreciation to all school staff for their hard work and dedication over the last few months in what was recognised as very difficult circumstances.

The meeting concluded at 3.15 pm.