

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 27 August 2025 at 9.35 am.

### **Present:**

Ms S Atkin	Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mrs I Campbell	Ms L Johnston
Mr A Christie	Ms L Kraft
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr D Macpherson
Ms H Crawford	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mrs M Paterson (substitute)
Mr R Gale	Mr R Stewart
Mr D Gregg	

### **Religious Representatives (non-voting):**

Rev Dr C Caley  
Ms S Lamont

### **Youth Convener (non-voting):**

Ms L McBain (remote)

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mr M Cameron (remote)	Mr G MacKenzie (remote)
Mr R Cross	Mrs I MacKenzie (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Ms C Gillies	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Dr M Gregson (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr R Jones (remote)	

### **In attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People  
Ms F Grant, Chief Officer – Secondary Education  
Ms B Martin-Scott, Chief Officer – Primary Education and Early Years  
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer – Integrated People Services  
Ms A MacPherson, Strategic Lead – Resources  
Ms H Brown, Senior Manager Early Years  
Ms E Rodgers, Policy Officer – Gaelic Development  
Ms J Gair, Employability Team Leader  
Mr D Boag, Employability Officer  
Mr A Hamilton, Employability Officer  
Ms M Chemonges, Highland Parent Council Partnership (remote)  
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Ms R Holt, Chief Executive, Eden Court  
Ms L McKittrick, Former Youth Convener

**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 J Finlayson in the Chair**

### **Preliminaries**

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair welcomed the new Highland Youth Convener, Leah McBain, to her first meeting of the Education Committee. She would give a presentation on her plan for the year ahead at the November meeting of the Committee.

### **Business**

#### **1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms L Dundas and Ms M MacCallum.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 9: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg  
Item 11: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

The following Members made general Transparency Statements but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

Mr J McGillivray, on the basis that he was still registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, and as a retired member and former Highland District Secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association.

Mr D Macpherson, on the basis that a close family member was a Primary School Teacher in Highland and two other family members were also employed by the Council.

#### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Education Committee.

#### **4. Good News/Outstanding Achievements Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

A presentation on outstanding achievements by pupils and schools had been circulated.

Congratulations having been extended to all the schools mentioned, the Committee **NOTED** the outstanding achievements.

**5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Final Outturn 2024/25 & Quarter 1 2025/26**  
**Fior Shuidheachadh Deireannach Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach**  
**2024/25 & Ràith 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, concern was expressed that the final outturn of almost £0.5m in 2024/25 was primarily due to vacant posts not being filled. Particular reference was made to the significant underspends in respect of the Early Learning and Childcare and Schools General budgets, which indicated children were not getting the support they needed. The report stated that no specific actions were being proposed at this time, which it was suggested was not good enough. Attention was also drawn to the significant overspend in respect of the Additional Support – Special Schools budget. A similar overspend was projected in 2025/26, which pointed to a pattern of chronic underfunding, and it was questioned whether it was misleading to present vacancy-driven underspends as a form of good news when pupils and staff were struggling without the resources they needed, and what assurances could be provided to parents of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) that their children were not being failed by an inadequate ASN budget.

In response, the Chair highlighted that the underspend represented 0.15% of the total Education budget. Officers assured Members that there was no deliberate intention to use vacancies to balance the budget. Given the significant size of the workforce, there would always be times when there were vacancies in the system that were being actively recruited to, and that had a budget impact. Attention was drawn to the workforce planning report at item 10 on the agenda, which detailed what was being done to address vacancies. In relation to ASN, the budget had risen by approximately 20-25% in the last five years and an additional £1m had been approved in the 2025/26 budget, so it was not the case that it was underfunded. It was confirmed the historic saving against Special Schools would be looked at as part of the Devolved School Management review.

Other Members added that it was important to recognise that ASN did not always refer to the very high level of need seen in Special Schools. It was a broad term, children with ASN representing up to 40% of the school population, and there were many different levels of need to be met. Many children with ASN were extremely capable and could achieve a great deal within mainstream education.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the 2024/25 final end of year outturn as set out in the report and Appendices 1 & 1a of the report;
- ii. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendices 2 & 2a of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and
- iv. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery.

## **6. High Life Highland Memorandum and Articles of Association Meòrachan agus Artaigilean Co-cheangailte High Life na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Reference was made to typographical errors and inconsistencies in articles 12, 12a, 13, 15, 29, 60, 63d, 64 and 124, which it was suggested should be amended prior to submission to the Scottish Charity Regulator. In relation to 63d in particular, the wording was ambiguous and could make Director reappointments unenforceable.

The Committee **AGREED** to amend the Memorandum and Articles of Association as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendment of any typographical errors.

## **7. Raising Attainment Strategy Update Cunntas às Ùr air an Ro-innleachd airson Buileachadh a Thogail**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair highlighted that it was intended to hold a Members' Seminar in respect of the Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy (RAAS) prior to the next meeting of the Committee, which he was sure would be welcomed by all Members.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the report, the strategic approach being taken to raising attainment, and the steady improvements being made were welcomed;
- whilst welcoming the four proposed themes set out in section 6.2.2 of the report, reference was made to the increasing number of children with identified ASN, each with individualised learning requirements. It was suggested that the lack of support for teaching staff, particularly in large classes, was one of the key things holding back raising attainment, and it was necessary to enshrine that within the RAAS. It was therefore intended to move an amendment proposing that a further theme, "The Lack of Additional Support Needs support for our teaching staff, including the need to have more Pupil Support Assistants", be added to the draft RAAS as a key to raising standards across Highland schools;
- with regard to the Raising Attainment Headteacher Reference Group, the diversity of schools and class sizes in Highland was emphasised, and an assurance was sought, and provided, that there would be representation across the eight Associated School Group (ASG) cluster areas;
- with reference to the suggested Core Plus Stretch Aims in Appendix 3 of the RAAS, the focus on P1 readiness and early intervention was welcomed, and further information was sought, and provided, in that regard. Members also welcomed the measure in respect of care experienced school leavers, and suggested it would be helpful to include an aim in respect of Young Carers, who also faced additional stress and barriers to attainment;
- in relation to the Stretch Aims in respect of attainment, it would be useful to include measures in respect of Maths and English as a Highland baseline even if the Scottish Government did not require them. Other Members supported the

suggestion, commenting that there were many more opportunities available to young people in terms of further and higher education and employment if they had achieved Maths and English to the required standard;

- the four proposed themes in the RAAS were very academic, and it was necessary to consider new themes that went beyond the academic professionalism of teachers, particularly given the Poverty and Equality Commission for Highland was now underway. Children spent more time out of school than they spent in school and, further to the earlier contribution proposing an additional theme, it was suggested that another theme should be “Improving and building the home support and facilities available to children to help them learn outwith the school day”;
- it would be useful, at the proposed Members’ seminar, to consider how changes could be implemented with more pace and urgency so that another cohort of children did not leave school without getting the benefit of the improvements being made;
- with reference to Appendix 3 of the report, it would be helpful to better understand the engagement that had taken place and what the symbols in the bottom right-hand corner of the slides represented, and to see Headteachers’ comments. The Chair confirmed that more detail in that regard could be provided at the Members’ Seminar;
- despite the challenges, progress had been made in raising attainment, and the commitment of staff, pupils and parents was commended. However, the gains were minimal, and Highland was still below the national average;
- the report referred to boards, reference groups and seminars, but parents did not want more meetings. They wanted the Council to set ambitious targets, and to know that their children were getting the support they needed to succeed;
- the report said very little about excellence. Closing the poverty-related attainment gap was vital but it must not come at the cost of stretching the highest achievers, and it was questioned where the plan was for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) excellence, computing pathways and university partnerships that lifted the brightest pupils to the next level;
- it was questioned how the RAAS could be delivered within the existing Education budget, particularly given teacher shortages, overstretched support staff, increasing demand for ASN support, and rising inflation;
- in terms of subject results, Physics, Biology, Business Management, Admin and IT, Computing, and Accounting, which were the building blocks of a future Highland economy, were all down;
- it was necessary to be more ambitious for the sake of Highland’s young people and, the need for pace having been reiterated, a request was made for a report to the Full Council in September. The Chair confirmed that, as indicated in the report, a further report would be brought to the Education Committee in November. It was added that schools were already engaging with the draft RAAS and work was ongoing on the ground to implement the ambitious plans;
- page 5 of the RAAS included figures on improvements since 2022, and it was suggested it would also be useful to provide a comparison with the pre-pandemic position. The Chair confirmed the data requested could be provided at the Members’ Seminar;
- attention was drawn to a typographical error on page 11 of the RAAS;
- congratulations were expressed to Highland’s young people for their hard work and the results they had achieved;
- when looking at attainment grades A to C, it was important to remember the qualifications that were not graded, and that a D grade was also a pass;

- information was sought, and provided, as to what extent the exam results appeals process changed the statistics as time went on;
- the incoming cohort of P1 pupils had been babies during the Covid pandemic, and it was important to remember that their pre-education experience had been very different to many other children and had impacted on their social development. Similarly, the current attainment results were in respect of young people who had had their education disrupted by the pandemic;
- Members were reminded of the Council's strong Whole Family Approach to health and education;
- it was necessary to understand and capture the work taking place in communities and by Community Partnerships. Reference was made to work taking place whereby school staff could refer young people to third sector hubs where they could access safe quiet space, computers and food. In addition, there were people in the community that had been PVG checked and were volunteering their time to provide extracurricular support and guidance and, for example, to support families with literacy challenges to complete forms for free school meals;
- in relation to membership of the Raising Attainment Board, it was queried whether there was capacity to include the Youth Convener, to represent the voice of young people, and a parent representative. In response, the Assistant Chief Executive – People concurred that it was critical to listen to the views of the young people going through the education system. Consideration would be given to whether the Raising Attainment Board was the appropriate forum, and to how to make engagement with young people meaningful. In terms of engagement with parents and carers, as indicated in section 8.2 of the report the Parental Engagement Strategy was one of the underpinning strategies that would help raise attainment. Consideration would be given to the Parental Engagement Strategy and the pupil voice being a core part of the agenda for the Members' Seminar;
- a request having been made for a briefing on recent senior staff changes in schools, the Chair explained that operational issues and matters relating to individual staff members were not for Elected Members to discuss; and
- in relation to Appendix 4 of the report, clarification was sought, and provided, as to why the Area Quality Improvement Manager in the N4 area was 0.6 Full Time Equivalent.

In responding to the contributions proposing additional themes, the Assistant Chief Executive - People concurred regarding the need to enshrine the supporting strategies around raising attainment and achievement, and attention was drawn to section 8.2 of the report which indicated that the 2025/26 Education and Learning Improvement/National Improvement Framework Plan would include key areas of work that required focused improvement activity to underpin the RAAS, namely, implementation of the Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy; an updated Health and Wellbeing Strategy; and a focus on Inclusive Practice and ASN.

It was suggested that, when the Improvement Plan was presented to the Committee in November, it should include seven pillars which were key to raising attainment and achievement, specifically, the four themes in the RAAS, Parental Involvement and Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusive Practice and ASN.

Ms H Crawford accepted assurances provided by both the Chair and the Assistant Chief Executive – People that her concerns formed part of the ethos of the RAAS and would be included, alongside the four themes, in the suggested seven pillars. She therefore withdrew her amendment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report and progress made;
- ii. **NOTED** the draft Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy (RAAS) 2025-2028 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **NOTED** that action to implement the RAAS would arise from the annual Education and Learning Improvement/National Improvement Framework (NIF) Plan to be brought forward to Committee in November 2025;
- iv. **NOTED** the summary of senior phase attainment at section 7 of the report, and that an in-depth analysis of the senior phase attainment for 2025 would be brought to Committee in November 2025;
- v. **AGREED** a Members' seminar to be arranged in advance of the November Committee;
- vi. **AGREED** that the Education and Learning Improvement/NIF Plan would include seven pillars which were key to raising attainment and achievement, specifically, the four themes in the RAAS, Parental Involvement and Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusive Practice and Additional Support Needs; and
- vii. **AGREED** that more detail on the engagement that had taken place with Headteachers, and pre-pandemic data for the purposes of comparison with the figures on page 5 of the RAAS, be provided at the Members' Seminar.

## 8. Scottish Languages Bill Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhile nan Cànan Albannach

There had been circulated Report No EDU/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Gaelic was central to Highland culture and identity, and the Council had led the way nationally in terms of Gaelic education;
- concern was expressed regarding the Scottish Government's estimate that the total cost of implementing the Scottish Languages Bill (the Bill) for both Gaelic and Scots across the whole of Scotland would be less than £700k over five years, which it was asserted would not cover the cost of recruiting teachers, adapting buildings and developing the resources needed. The Council would only receive a fraction of the total funding and would have to address any shortfall from already overstretched budgets;
- the Bill introduced a new statutory duty to provide Gaelic education where there was demand, but it was unclear what sanctions would apply if the Council could not meet parents' requests for Gaelic provision, and concern was expressed that the Council could be exposed to legal challenge;
- the Council had been delivering Gaelic education successfully for many years. However, the Bill also gave the Scots language official status with no clear delivery plan and no additional funding, which risked diluting the resources available for Gaelic;
- the Bill risked raising expectations that could not be met, particularly given the national teacher shortage and the fact the Council already struggled to recruit Gaelic teachers, and it was hoped the Chair would join calls to the Scottish Government for adequate funding to successfully deliver high quality language

services. The Chair recognised the challenges articulated, and the need to ensure the Council had sufficient resources to implement the provisions of the Bill;

- in primary school, many children got the opportunity to experience languages such as French through, for example, learning songs or numbers, and it was queried whether it would be possible include learning a few Gaelic words in primary education across the board;
- it was queried how it was planned to promote the Scots language, and where British Sign Language (BSL) and the Council's BSL Plan sat in terms of language delivery;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Bilingual Policy referred to was Gaelic-specific;
- bilingualism improved cognitive abilities and helped with literacy and the learning of other languages;
- there was a decline in modern languages learning in the UK, particularly in Scotland, and it was queried whether any data was available on how Gaelic had helped encourage students to opt for modern languages when they made their subject choices. The Policy Officer – Gaelic Development undertook to revert to Ms S Fanet in that regard;
- it was necessary to embrace Gaelic and not make it exclusive to those enrolled in Gaelic Medium Education;
- the Bill was a significant step forward for the Gaelic and Scots languages;
- information was sought, and provided, on the anticipated practical impact of the Bill in Highland given that much of what was set out in it was already taking place; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that further guidance was awaited regarding the creation of Areas of Linguistic Significance.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the next steps outlined in section 9 of the report.

## **9. Employability Service Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis So-fhastachd**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie – in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**  
**Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/23/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair commented that the report added another dimension to the matters discussed at the Education Committee and looked at the essential links between employability and supporting parents out of poverty through the development of a unique Highland Employability Service and by progressing the No One Left Behind policy approach.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-



- information was sought, and provided, on how many of the 1100 unemployed parents that had engaged with the Employability Service had been supported into a job, and how the length of time they stayed in these jobs was monitored, and it was requested that this information be included in future reports;
- helping parents into secure and fair employment was the most effective way of alleviating child poverty, and it was good to see a significant amount of money being allocated to this. It was queried how the Employability Service was ensuring the project delivered lasting, positive outcomes for families;
- it was suggested that knowing the unemployment figures for Highland would help to target services towards some of the most vulnerable members of society, and information was provided on those figures and how they were reached;
- in response to concerns that targets had not been met in 2024/25 and that it looked likely there would be a similar outcome in the first quarter of 2025/26, it was explained that, since the implementation of the No One Left Behind policy, the funding allocation for the employability service had increased significantly leading to capacity challenges, and it was confirmed that the service was continuing to be developed to raise the level of delivery to the level of funding available;
- it was suggested that a more localised approach, with employability opportunities being identified within communities, which would help to sustain rural communities, should be considered, as well as working with bodies such as local Community Planning Partnerships, Community Trusts, nature organisations and large third sector organisations to expand the way in which employability services were delivered. In response, it was explained that the Employability team had already begun to take a localised approach including working with Community Planning Partnerships, and it was confirmed that a report on the different options for delivering employability could be brought to the Committee in the new year;
- it was requested that a breakdown of the work being done in each of the three Local Employability Partnership areas be provided to Area Committees;
- it was queried what could be done through work experience or volunteering to use people's skills to benefit schools and pupils. The Chair confirmed that work experience in schools was still taking place, and PVG checks were required;
- the case studies included in the report were very helpful, and it would be useful to include case studies in other reports;
- the strategy of helping people to get into employment by identifying appropriate vacancies within the Council was welcomed, and it was queried whether the same approach was being taken in other public sector organisations such as NHS Highland and Police Scotland;
- it was expected that as the service bedded in the rate of change would improve but this would need to be monitored; and
- information was sought, and provided, on how the conversion to employment rate of 36% had been calculated, and whether there were any themes in terms of the challenges faced by those who were unsuccessful in securing employment.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the No One Left Behind policy and financial agenda which was supporting the design and development of a unique Highland employability service. This included the commitment to offer Specialist Employability Support for people with more intensive support needs, alongside an increasing focus on tackling child poverty through supporting parents out of poverty through increasing household income;

- ii. **NOTED** the three-year Highland Employability Partnership Strategic Plan (2025-28) and Annual Operational and Investment Plans for 2025-26; and
- iii. **NOTED** the implementation of a hybrid delivery model to support a mixed economy of provision and enable capacity-building and sustainability within the employability system; and
- iv. **AGREED** that a report outlining the different options for delivering employability services would be brought to the Committee in the new year.

## **10. Education Workforce Planning Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais Planadh Sgioba-obrach Foghlaim**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/24/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair welcomed the fact that 20 staff had completed the Into Headship programme which should support the challenges faced in terms of Headteacher and senior leader recruitment in the Council's educational establishments.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to recruit subject teachers, and what interim measures had been put in place to support pupils; the times of year when staff absences were most prevalent; and whether staff had access to information and training on how to prevent the spread of infection in schools, as adults could be severely affected by illnesses that children recovered from quickly, leading to an increase in staff absences;
- it was questioned whether negative headlines might discourage people from wanting to work in Highland, and information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to attract potential probationer teachers to the area;
- it was highlighted that a large percentage of the workforce was approaching retirement, and it was queried whether there was a continuity strategy in place. In response, it was clarified that the large percentage of staff approaching retirement age referred to non-teaching staff, and Modern Apprenticeships were being used to encourage more young people into these roles. The age profile of teaching staff was much more positive;
- the increase in the number of Modern Apprenticeships was welcomed;
- the move from fixed term to permanent contracts was encouraging, and clarification was sought on how many fixed term contracts were currently in place and how the proposed change to labour and employment laws, providing full rights to new employees, would affect the use of fixed term contracts. The Strategic Lead – Resources undertook to provide information to Mr R Gale on the number of fixed term contracts currently in place;
- in response to a question, the Strategic Lead – Resources undertook to provide Mr D Gregg with information on the shortage of Maths and English teachers and how staff turnover in Highland compared nationally; and
- the importance of recruiting staff to work in Highland early in their careers was emphasised, and information was provided on the measures being taken to ensure that the desired number of probationer teacher posts within Highland were filled.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Education workforce planning progress report and action plan; and
- ii. the positive outcomes from the report, including:-
  - a. implementation of the My Highland Future Portfolio which would support workforce development and offer more career-focused opportunities;
  - b. 108 Community Learning and Development staff had been transferred from High Life Highland into Education & Learning via TUPE;
  - c. progress in moving staff from fixed-term to permanent contracts in non-teaching roles, 221 had moved in August 2024 and a further 156 were due to move in August 2025;
  - d. the staff turnover rate for both Teaching and Non-Teaching staff had decreased in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24;
  - e. Senior Management restructure and recruitment completed;
  - f. 100 probationer teachers had been employed — an increase of 27 from the 2023/24 academic year; and
  - g. 20 staff had completed Scottish Government's 'Into Headship' programme in the last session - for teachers working in, or aspiring to, leadership roles in Scottish primary or secondary schools.

#### **11. Performance Monitoring and Delivery Plan Update – Q1 2025/26**

**Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh agus mun Phlana Lìbhrigidh – R1 2025/26**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie – in his capacity as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/25/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed around the difficulty in accessing information from services leading Members to make Freedom of Information (FOI) requests after all other methods of seeking information had been unsuccessful. It was suggested that Elected Members having to make FOI requests reflected badly on the Council and pointed to a lack of transparency which could lead to reduced public confidence, and it was queried what was being done to resolve this issue;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding Complimentary Tariff Scores, and it was confirmed that annual Complimentary Tariff Scores by year group would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee;
- in response to a request for a review of the types of statistics included in performance monitoring reports and the inclusion of more meaningful data such as further benchmarking against other local authorities and an analysis of school inspection reports, it was clarified that the report follows a standard format prepared by the Corporate Performance team and stemmed from the Service Plan. It was confirmed that it was intended to refresh all Service Plans, and the inclusion of additional performance reporting data could be considered at that time. In the

meantime, consideration would be given to what data could be included in the Improvement Plan which would come to the Committee in November;

- information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the reduction in performance in respect of payment of invoices within 10 days, whether local businesses were prioritised when paying invoices, and whether, when complaints were closed, the resolution was to the satisfaction of the complainant; and
- it having been queried whether the updates at section 9 of the report had been reported to Area Committees, information was provided on plans to increase reporting at area level and provide opportunities for Members to engage with Area Quality Improvement Teams around performance and improvement in schools in their areas. Performance data on matters such as invoice payments could not be provided at area level. However, the Assistant Chief Executive – People undertook to whether to investigate whether there were any particular areas where performance was lower, and to look at what could be done to improve the position. Members welcomed the proposals for increased reporting at area level.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Service's performance and risk information; and
- ii. the Delivery Plan progress information.

## **12. Eden Court Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùirt an Easbaig**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chief Executive of Eden Court gave a presentation on the ways in which Eden Court was opening up engagement and expanding creative opportunities across Highland, including youth theatre, dance and film programmes; the intergenerational studio programme; qualification courses at National 5 and Higher level; the Futures Studio Programme for young people who faced complex challenges in their lives; working with schools; and the In on the Act project in rural communities.

During discussion, the breadth and depth of work done by Eden Court was commended, and information was sought, and provided, on whether there was a way of building capacity so that all secondary schools could offer some drama at an earlier level, thereby building pupils' interest in drama qualifications; whether there were any plans to hold events outwith the Inverness area that would bring money into other parts of the Highlands; and how the 61% cultural penetration rate had been calculated.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report at Appendix 1 of the covering report.

## **13. Education Bill: Update** **Bile an Fhoghlaim: Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair highlighted that more comprehensive information on the new qualifications body, Qualifications Scotland, and the new independent HM Inspectorate of Education was expected in the coming months.

The Committee **NOTED** the briefing report.

**14. Minutes of Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**

**Geàrr-chunntas na Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail do Thidsearan**

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, draft Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers on 3 June 2025.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm.