

OPTIONS APPRAISAL FOR THE PROVISION OF GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION IN OBAN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the meeting of Community Services Committee on 23 August 2018 elected members, in discussing a report “Feasibility study into a new Gaelic medium Primary School in Oban” (appendix 2), requested officers continue their evaluation of the Feasibility Study. This exercise is now complete and this evaluation has led to consideration of a number of different options to deliver Gaelic Medium Education in the Oban area.
- 1.2 This report presents these options and evaluates the feasibility and viability of each based on an analysis of impact, deliverability, affordability and risk. The three options considered are:
- a) Arrangements for delivering Gaelic Medium Education in Oban remain unchanged and continue to be organised as an integrated ‘department’ within Rockfield Primary School at Oban Primary Campus.
 - b) Changes to the management structure of Rockfield Primary School with the addition of a Depute Head Teacher (Gaelic Language and Culture) with specific management responsibilities in the Gaelic Medium Unit.
 - c) Build a new stand-alone Gaelic medium primary school with Sgoil-Àraich within the Oban and Lorn area.
- 1.3 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:-
- a) Considers the evaluation of the options for delivering Gaelic Medium Education in the Oban area.
 - b) Agrees that Option B is the recommended option based on an evaluation of impact, deliverability, affordability and risk.
 - c) Requests that the Executive Director of Customer Services contacts Comann nam Pàrant an Òbain declining the request to undertake a formal consultation process to establish a Gaelic medium school in Oban.

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IN OBAN**

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 At the meeting of Community Services Committee on 23 August 2018 elected members, in discussing a report “Feasibility Study into a new Gaelic Medium Primary School in Oban”, requested officers continue their evaluation of the feasibility study.
- 2.2 This exercise is now complete and this evaluation has led to consideration of a number of different options to deliver Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in the Oban area. The purpose of the option appraisal is to evaluate the proposal for a new stand-alone Gaelic medium primary school in Oban against other available options to determine the optimum option for the continuing provision of GME in the Oban area. This report presents these options, and evaluates the feasibility and viability of each based on an analysis of impact, deliverability, affordability and risk.
- 2.3 The assessment criteria used was:

Impact

The capacity of each option to maximise the potential educational benefit. This was considered the most significant criterion for determining the most appropriate option.

Deliverability

This takes account of the complexity of delivering each option and the likelihood in each case that the option can be successfully implemented in a timely manner.

Affordability

This assesses the scale of the potential costs associated with each option.

Risk

An assessment of the factors that might affect risk to deliverability of each option and also risk to impact and affordability. Assessment was undertaken when impact, affordability and deliverability had been reviewed.

The three options considered are

- a) Arrangements for delivering Gaelic Medium Education in Oban remain unchanged and continues to be organised in the Gaelic Medium Unit within Rockfield Primary School at Oban Primary Campus.
- b) Changes to the management structure of Rockfield Primary School with the addition of a Depute Head Teacher (Gaelic Language and Culture) with specific management responsibilities in the Gaelic Medium Unit.
- c) Build a new stand-alone Gaelic medium primary school with Sgoil-Àraich within the Oban and Lorn area.

2.4 In January 2018 a feasibility study was commissioned by Comann nam Pàrant an Òbain, with funding from Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Argyll and Bute Council. The brief of the study was to “consider the feasibility of a stand-alone Gaelic medium school in Oban with additional community use space and potential income generation streams.” The Feasibility Study was completed in May 2018 and presents an argument in favour of the idea of a stand-alone Gaelic medium school.

2.5 Gaelic Medium Education (GME) is currently delivered in the Oban area at the Oban Primary Campus where the Gaelic Medium Unit (GMU) is a separate ‘department’ within the Rockfield Primary School. The current roll of the GMU at Rockfield Primary School is 48 pupils.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:-

- a) Considers the evaluation of the options for delivering Gaelic Medium Education in the Oban area.
- b) Agrees that Option B is the preferred option based on an evaluation of impact, deliverability, affordability and risk.
- c) Requests the Executive Director of Customer Services contacts Comann nam Pàrant an Òbain declining the request to undertake a formal consultation process to establish a Gaelic medium school in Oban.

4.0 DETAIL

The three options considered have been evaluated based on an analysis of the impact, deliverability, affordability and risk for each option.

Option A

4.2 Arrangements for delivering Gaelic Medium Education in Oban remain unchanged and continues to be organised as an integrated department within Rockfield Primary School at Oban Primary Campus.

4.3 Impact/Benefits

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) will continue to be delivered within Rockfield Primary School. The school improvement process for Rockfield Primary School, which includes a specific action plan for GME, led by the Headteacher in

consultation with the Principal Teacher (Gaelic) and central education officers will continue to ensure standards and quality of GME remains an equally high priority.

- 4.4 Having GME within Rockfield Primary School offers the opportunity for resources, both personnel and material, to be shared. The staffing allocation, whilst separate for Gaelic and English, allows for some flexibility in how expertise is used across the school.
- 4.5 While Gaelic medium staff currently take part in professional development specific to GME, they also take part in continuous professional development with members of staff of the English medium classes relating to generic teaching methodologies common to both, allowing for greater exchange of ideas and partnership working.
- 4.5 Funding allocated to Rockfield Primary School and Gaelic Medium Unit (GMU) often benefits pupils attending both with the sharing of certain resources and materials.
- 4.6 Whole school events such as community assemblies, services and concerts provide an opportunity to promote Gaelic language and culture across the whole of Rockfield Primary School through the participation and contributions of GME pupils. English medium pupils benefit from the expertise within the GMU and the strong Gaelic ethos across the school, and regularly participate along with GME pupils in local and national Mods. While GME pupils take part in a biennial Gaelic medium residential trip with Gaelic medium pupils from other areas, other educational trips and visiting education specialists often involve all pupils across the school and are funded from the whole school budget, offering a wide and rich range of experiences not always affordable by smaller schools.
- 4.7 Deliverability
GME will continue to be delivered as at present and no changes will be required.
- 4.8 Affordability
There are no additional costs associated with this option which will be funded through the existing budget arrangements. Whole school budgeting benefits both English and GME education through the flexible use of resources.
- 4.9 Risk
GME children will not experience full immersion. This is due to the fact that not all staff who interact with GME children at Rockfield Primary School speak Gaelic. This may affect progress and attainment of GME pupils.

5.0 Option B

- 5.1 Changes to the management structure of Rockfield Primary School with the addition of a Depute Head Teacher (Gaelic Language and Culture) with specific management responsibilities in the Gaelic Medium Unit.
- 5.2 Impact/Benefits
To introduce this change, there will be no requirement to engage in a formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. All of the impact and benefits outlined as part of Option A are applicable to Option

B, and in addition the following benefits apply.

- 5.3 The addition of a Depute Head Teacher (DHT) with additional management responsibilities in the GMU would add capacity to the school improvement processes within Rockfield Primary School, specifically in relation to GME and the further development of Gaelic language and cultural activities across the establishment. The DHT, with greater management responsibility than the present Principal Teacher (PT), could potentially take a lead role in increasing the level of immersion experienced by GME pupils. The DHT would be based mainly within the GMU, and with a lesser teaching commitment than the present PT, would have a greater focus on raising attainment and monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning within the GMU.
- 5.4 The DHT would have a remit for developing partnerships within the wider Gaelic community such as the Furan Gaelic Centre and An Comunn Gàidhealach an Òbain and with Gaelic medium establishments in other authorities in order to benefit the learning experiences and achievements of pupils attending the GMU at Rockfield Primary School. The DHT would engage with organisations such as the Northern Alliance Regional Collaborative and contribute to learning and teaching initiatives planned by the partner organisations in a way that will not only benefit GME pupils at Rockfield, but also other GME pupils across Argyll and Bute. The DHT would take a lead role in contributing to the school's improvement plan with specific lead for GME and developing a programme for Gaelic Learner Education and Gaelic cultural activities across the school.
- 5.5 Deliverability
Once funding is identified this option would be relatively simple to progress as there would be no changes to the current infrastructure of GME at Rockfield Primary School. Given current challenges in recruiting Gaelic staff and senior leaders, a relocation package offered at an early stage in the recruitment process may attract greater interest in the post.
- 5.6 Affordability
The cost associated with option B would be in the region of £20,500 per annum. National insurance and superannuation for these posts have been included. The Scottish Government would look favourably on initial funding for this post to be met through the Gaelic Specific Grant.
- 5.7 Risks
There would be an increase in ongoing staffing costs (see affordability). The appointment of DHT (Gaelic Language and Culture) would be the first post of this type in Argyll and Bute. There are challenges both locally and nationally in the recruitment and retention of senior leaders and Gaelic medium staff.
- 5.8 Although the DHT would take a greater front line leadership role in whole school activities than Gaelic speaking staff presently do, there remains the fact that GME children will not experience full immersion. This is due to the fact that not all staff who interact with GME children at Rockfield speak Gaelic. This may affect progress and attainment of GME pupils.

6.0 Option C

- 6.1 Build a new stand-alone Gaelic medium primary school with Sgoil-Àraich

within the Oban and Lorn area.

6.2 Impact/Benefits

A stand-alone Gaelic school would have its own identity. Potentially all staff at a stand-alone Gaelic school would speak Gaelic or be committed to learning the language. This would result in a more immersive Gaelic language experience for both children attending the school and any staff for whom Gaelic is not their native language. This would potentially lead to raising attainment.

6.3 There is potential for the school to act as a Gaelic language hub for the community with increased opportunities for wider cultural engagement through, in particular, out of school hours activities and, for example, adult and community learning opportunities. This would potentially contribute to the promotion of the benefits of bilingualism and the importance attached to Gaelic as a language.

6.4 Leadership and the school improvement process would be solely focused on GME. The professional learning calendar for staff would be unique to the needs of GME and would not be part of a wider establishment. Based on evidence gathered from elsewhere the number of pupils accessing GME may increase due to the existence of a stand-alone school.

6.5 Deliverability

The Scottish Government have indicated that they may provide financial support for capital costs but are not in a position at this point to guarantee the level of support that might be available (see 6.6). Delivery of a stand-alone Gaelic school would be pending a suitable site being identified (see section 6.10). Ongoing revenue costs would require to be subsumed by the Council (see 6.7). There are challenges both locally and nationally in the recruitment and retention of GM staff and senior leaders of the required experience and quality.

6.6 Affordability

The Scottish Government have indicated that, following discussing any proposal with the local authority, they would hope to look favourably at supporting capital costs through their Gaelic Capital Fund. They cannot guarantee the level of funding until such discussions have taken place. There is a likelihood of a capital contribution being required from the Council. Council provided indicative costs for a new build to inform the Feasibility Study. Cost of building a school of the size proposed would be in the region of £5.8M. Purchase of the site, landscaping of external areas and ongoing servicing would increase this cost. Professional fees would also need to be included and would be somewhere around 15% of works costs. Without an indication of a preferred site and any known "abnormals" it is not possible to estimate total project costs at this stage.

6.7 Apart from a potential contribution from the Gaelic Specific Grant for an initial period, there would be pressure on council budgets due to ongoing costs of an additional establishment. This would include heating and lighting, cleaning and maintenance of the building, maintenance of the grounds, staffing costs, maintaining and renewing equipment and materials and potential transport costs. The revenue costs (including staffing) of schools of a similar size to

that proposed is outlined in the table below:

School Name	2017/18 Primary budget	2017/18 Pre 5 budget	Departmental Admin Expenditure	Total
School A	524,888	91,671	40,495	£657,054
School B	396,474	71,642	33,671	£501,787

6.8 Risks

A proposal to discontinue GME at Rockfield Primary School and build a new GME school would mean a requirement to engage in a formal consultation process under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (see section 7).

- 6.9 There could be pressures on both the Council's capital and revenue budgets as detailed in 6.6 and 6.7.
- 6.10 There is very little land available in Oban area for development of any type. Land is at a premium and doesn't come onto the open market very often. There are no identified development sites in the town and Oban is constrained both by topography and ground conditions.
- 6.11 There are challenges both locally and nationally in the recruitment and retention of senior leaders and Gaelic medium staff.
- 6.12 Discontinuing of the GME department at Rockfield Primary school would lessen the exposure of English medium pupils to high quality Gaelic learner education and cultural activities, taking away the expertise currently available within the GME department.
- 6.13 If the new school were to be a distance from the town of Oban there would be a need for school transport to be remodeled with an impact on existing services.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The detailed scoring of the three options outlined above is provided in appendix 1. The recommended option is option B, introducing changes to the management structure of Rockfield Primary School with the addition of a Depute Head Teacher (Gaelic Language and Culture) with specific management responsibilities in the Gaelic Medium Unit.
- 7.2 If the Education Authority were minded to proceed with the request to establish a new Gaelic Medium primary school in Oban, option C, this would be considered a 'relevant proposal' under the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. This means that a formal consultation process under the 2010 Act would be triggered.
- 7.3 As part of this process, the Education Authority must prepare and publish a proposal paper that contains details of the proposal and an educational benefits statement. The educational benefits statement reflects the Education Authority's assessment of the educational effects and benefits of the proposal on any pupils of an affected school, any other users of those school facilities,

the pupils of other schools in the Education Authority's area and any children who would be likely to become pupils of the school. The Education Authority must then undertake a consultation with the various statutory consultees identified in Paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the 2010 Act. As such a proposal would affect the provision of Gaelic medium education, Bòrd na Gàidhlig must also be consulted (Paragraph 11 of Schedule 2 to the 2010 Act). Part of the consultation process would involve a public meeting in order to gather views from parents, community bodies and any other parties with an interest in the proposal.

- 7.4 At the end of the consultation process, a report is prepared by Education Scotland on the educational aspects of the proposal, and thereafter the Education Authority must prepare and publish a consultation report which reviews the proposal based on Education Scotland's report and then will ultimately make a recommendation on the proposal which may be approved by the Education Authority no sooner than 3 weeks after publication of the consultation report in order for the proposal to be implemented.
- 7.5 Should elected members be mindful to approve the recommendations as per the report and suitable budget was identified for option B, other than the risk of failure to recruit, option B could be implemented relatively quickly. There would be no need for formal consultation to implement this option.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Policy: None at this stage
- 8.2 Financial: Revenue and capital costs for all three options has been considered.
- 8.3 Legal: The introduction of a new Gaelic school in the Oban area would follow the legislative process as detailed Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 8.4 HR: Any new posts would be required to be job sized
- 8.5 Equalities: An equalities and economic impact assessment will be required if option C is proposed.
- 8.6 Risk: The risk of the deliverability of the options has been considered in the evaluation.
- 8.7 Customer Service: None at this stage

Appendix 1: Gaelic Provision Oban Scoring Matrix

Appendix 2: Feasibility Study into a Gaelic Medium Primary School in Oban

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