

EDUCATION CHANGE PROGRAMME - SCHOOL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report has been prepared following the previous decision of the Community Services Committee on 10th June 2021 and details the programme of engagement which officers undertook with our communities, our staff, their representative bodies and the wider group of stakeholders in relation to the school leadership model proposals.
- 1.2 This report sets out the findings and outcomes of that consultation process and makes a number of recommendations in relation to the next steps for this element of the overall process.
- 1.3 The view of the Education Service is that the consultation exercise has highlighted that there are a number of risks that are being faced, and will continue to be faced, by the Service - specifically in relation to the current leadership model for education, the Service's ongoing work to deliver improvement, implications of national reform that the Service will require to address, key issues raised by stakeholders as part the consultation process, and other local and national challenges that the Service are encountering and will continue to encounter.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 In terms of the School Leadership consultation, the Community Services Committee are invited to:
- 2.1.1 Note the outcomes and analysis of the extensive engagement and consultation process, involving our communities, our staff and their representative bodies, our school pupils, and the wider group of stakeholders;
- 2.1.2 Agree that the consultation exercise provided valuable feedback from teachers, pupils and communities.
- 2.1.3 Recognise the commitment of the Education Service in striving to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people of Argyll and Bute, in line with Members' ambitions;
- 2.1.4 Agree that the proposals as consulted on are not progressed;

- 2.1.5 Note the continued use of shared headships as a useful operational tool to address recruitment challenges;
- 2.1.6 Agree that the Education Service, working with Head Teachers, continue to work across all aspects of the Service to deliver improvement, to address the implications of national reform, to address the key issues raised in the consultation and other local and national challenges the Service is encountering, and will continue to encounter (such as those detailed in Sections 5 and 9.3 of this report and in Section 8 and Appendix 1 of this report).
- 2.2 In terms of the wider attainment gap and variations between schools, the Community Services Committee are invited to:
 - 2.2.1 Note the Audit Scotland findings that:
 - a) The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims.
 - b) There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils.
 - 2.2.2 Agree that the Education Service continues to address the variation in performance within Argyll and Bute schools and work with Head Teachers at a local, and with partners at regional level, to improve outcomes for children and young people. Updates on progress would be reported to Committee within the current performance reports.

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3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 The school leadership workstream, forming part of the wider Education Change Programme, was tasked with developing a strategy and models that could be implemented across our school estate in relation to the leadership and management of a collective of schools.
- 3.2 To meet the brief and most importantly the challenges of delivering excellent learning and teaching, empowered leaders and learners and best value across our learning estate we developed our own collective leadership model. Further details about this proposed model are set out in the 10th June 2021 Community Services Committee report on this issue. This model reflects the diversity of Argyll and Bute's schools and understands our learners, staff, parents and communities in their specific contexts. The main focus of the model centres upon the educational benefits for our learners.
- 3.3 The Argyll and Bute collective leadership model has been created with the input of Head Teachers and education professionals from across the authority. The model we have created is scalable, takes into account the needs of all sizes of school and reflects the rural nature and uniqueness of the delivery of education in our area.
- 3.4 There are a number of challenges in delivering education in an authority as diverse as our own. These challenges include the equality of educational opportunity, the experience and professional competence of school leaders and improving attainment for all. Effectively addressing these challenges will deliver educational benefits for both learners and school leaders.
- 3.5 For our learners the educational benefits include improved educational outcomes, improved curriculum development and learning and teaching meeting learners' needs, improved sharing of resources and improved partnership working with schools in a collective all resulting in positive and sustained destinations for our young people.
- 3.6 For our school leaders the educational benefits include empowerment of school leaders, career enhancement and progression, continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities and reducing the likelihood of failure to recruit to key posts.

- 3.7 This report sets out the findings and outcomes of a programme of engagement which was undertaken with our communities, our staff and their representative bodies, and the wider group of stakeholders in relation to the school leadership model proposal over the course of November 2021 – March 2022 following the previous decision of the Community Services Committee on 10th June 2021 directing this to be undertaken.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 In terms of the School Leadership consultation, the Community Services Committee are invited to:

4.1.1 Note the outcomes and analysis of the extensive engagement and consultation process, involving our communities, our staff and their representative bodies, our school pupils, and the wider group of stakeholders;

4.1.2 Agree that the consultation exercise provided valuable feedback from teachers, pupils and communities;

4.1.3 Recognise the commitment of the Education Service in striving to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people of Argyll and Bute, in line with Members' ambitions;

4.1.4 Agree that the proposals as consulted on are not progressed;

4.1.5 Note the continued use of shared headships as a useful operational tool to address recruitment challenges;

4.1.6 Agree that the Education Service, working with Head Teachers, continue to work across all aspects of the Service to deliver improvement, to address the implications of national reform, to address the key issues raised in the consultation and other local and national challenges the Service is encountering, and will continue to encounter (such as those detailed in Sections 5 and 9.3 of this report and in Section 8 and Appendix 1 of this report).

- 4.2 In terms of the wider attainment gap and variations between schools, the Community Services Committee are invited to:

4.2.1 Note the Audit Scotland findings that:

- a) The poverty-related attainment gap remains wide and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19. Progress on closing the gap has been limited and falls short of the Scottish Government's aims.
- b) There is wide variation in education performance across councils, with evidence of worsening performance on some indicators in some councils.

4.2.2 Agree that the Education Service continues to address the variation in performance within Argyll and Bute schools and work with Head Teachers at a local, and with partners at regional level, to improve outcomes for children and

young people. Updates on progress would be reported to Committee within the current performance reports.

5.0 BACKGROUND

5.1 The proposals which were the subject of the recent engagement and consultation exercise have been developed and prepared by senior education professionals from across the Authority, with a view to future proofing our education system against current and future challenges, and most importantly of all, to deliver equity and excellence in education provision for all our children and young people. The proposals have been developed having regard to impending national education reform and policy, in particular, “Putting Learners at the Centre – Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education – Professor Ken Muir” which will require changes to the status quo to deliver equity for children and young people:

[Putting Learners at the Centre: Towards a Future Vision for Scottish Education - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-centre-towards-future-vision-scottish-education/)

5.2 Some of the key sources of information currently available within the education system that have been used to inform the case for change and the proposal (this list is not exhaustive) are as follows:

- *OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) review of Scottish Education* – report published June 2021¹
- This was followed by a consultation on the reform of the SQA and Education Scotland led by Dr Ken Muir, which was announced at the end of September 2021 (final report published on 9th March 2022²) as well as a review of *Curriculum for Excellence – Implementation Framework* (published October 2021)³.
- The *Review of Additional Support for Learning Implementation (2020)* outlines a number of areas in which further focus is required by leaders and managers across the education system, in order to ensure that mainstreaming and inclusion, and the equitable allocation of resources is of priority. The proposed model creates the conditions to allow our schools to meet these expectations more fully. This review is known as the *Morgan Review*⁴.

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/improving-schools-in-scotland.htm>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/putting-learners-centre-towards-future-vision-scottish-education/>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2021/10/scotlands-curriculum-future-implementation-framework-oecds-2021-review-curriculum-excellence/documents/scotlands-curriculum-future-implementation-framework-oecds-2021-review-curriculum-excellence/scotlands-curriculum-future-implementation-framework-oecds-2021-review-curriculum-excellence/govscot%3Adocument/scotlands-curriculum-future-implementation-framework-oecds-2021-review-curriculum-excellence.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-additional-support-learning-implementation/>

- ICEA (International Council of Education Advisors) Report (2020) – this report places a focus on the importance of collaboration and partnership working within a '*networked learning system*' which links directly to the aspirations of the proposed model⁵.
- To deliver excellence and equity all schools and their partners must work together in a collaborative and collegiate way. The creation of collectives across Argyll and Bute will enhance and improve the cluster working that is already in place. Collectives that plan, grow, learn and work together ('*networked learning systems*') would enhance the potential for the local context of schools to have a stronger voice both within and across collectives to drive forward improved outcomes for our children and young people.
- The implementation of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) across Scotland in 2018 is evidence of the need to develop and embed real collaborative practice in order to facilitate empowerment and improvement across the education system. The recent Scottish Government RIC review, published on 16th December 2021, evidences early impact and the proposed model facilitates a replication of this need for collaborative potential in order to drive forward improved outcomes for all children and young people⁶
- *Scottish Government: Equity Audit* (January 2021)⁷
- *Scottish Government: Closing the poverty related attainment gap – progress report (2016-2021)*⁸
- *Audit Scotland – Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education*⁹

5.3 Section 1 of the *Education (Scotland) Act* 1980 imposes a duty on all Education Authorities to secure for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education. The *Education (Scotland) Act* 2016 introduced the National Improvement Framework and the vision for excellence and equity of school education.

5.4 To deliver excellence and equity, we need sustainable schools of sustainable quality. Our schools need to be efficient and well managed, so that they can continue to be anchor institutions in their local communities.

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/international-council-education-advisers-report-2018-2020/documents/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/review-regional-improvement-collaboratives/documents/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/impact-assessment/2021/01/equity-audit-deepening-understanding-impact-covid-19-school-building-closures-children-socio-economically-disadvantaged-backgrounds-setting-clear-areas-focus-accelerating-recovery/documents/equity-audit/equity-audit/govscot%3Adocument/equity-audit.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/closing-poverty-related-attainment-gap-report-progress-2016-2021/>

⁹ <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/improving-outcomes-for-young-people-through-school-education>

- 5.5 Argyll and Bute’s economic infrastructure requires a strong, sustainable school system. Without this the area cannot attract and retain people and skills. School rolls across the area are falling, putting the sustainability of some schools at risk. Some job vacancies in schools are becoming harder to fill, as the pool of skilled applicants is reduced.
- 5.6 The geography of Argyll and Bute raises further unique issues for education as the area’s population is widely dispersed with many rural and island communities. A third of our schools have less than 30 pupils. The largest has over 1,200. Argyll and Bute spends more per pupil per head versus national spending per pupil per head with only 3 Local Authorities spending more (Shetland, Orkney and Eilean Siar). The table below indicates the increase in spend per pupil per head from 2016/17 to 2020/21:

Spending per pupil – 2020/2021*		
	Primary (£)	Secondary (£)
Scotland	5,916	7,657
Argyll and Bute	7,438	10,462
Spending per pupil – 2016/2017		
	Primary (£)	Secondary (£)
Scotland	5444	7,719
Argyll and Bute	6,500	9,553

* Source: Local Government Benchmarking Framework

- 5.7 The proposed leadership model is intended to increase leadership capacity in all of our schools. Its intention was to separate strategic and operational roles – empowering teachers to teach and leaders to lead. Further, the proposed model will enable collaboration, co-operation and sharing between nearby schools – thereby also improving and equalising access to resources. The proposed model also intends to support consistency of curriculum and teaching across a collective which in turn should increase career opportunities for school staff. Adding new roles at the top of the leadership structure, and also in middle leadership, increases opportunities for career progression. This enhances the overall recruitment offer, attracting higher calibre applicants for future roles.
- 5.8 No school closures are recommended as part of the proposal. It was always the intention that schools would keep their unique identities with only the leadership model changing.
- 5.9 The concept of shared headships is not a new one – neither nationally nor in Argyll and Bute. The following schools within Argyll and Bute are currently subject to joint/shared/executive headships, arising as a result of challenges recruiting qualified and competent Head Teachers, and so that the Education Authority can continue to fulfil its legislative duties in relation to these schools. Learning from the implementation of these joint/shared/executive headships, their successes and challenges was used to shape and influence the design of the collective leadership model:

- Achahoish and Clachan Primary Schools
- Inveraray and Furnace Primary Schools
- Arinagour and Kilninver Primary Schools
- Carradale, Castlehill and Drumlemble Primary Schools
- Glassary and Tayvallich Primary Schools
- Dalintober and Glenbarr Primary Schools
- Dunoon Grammar and Campbeltown Grammar Schools
- Easdale and Luing Primary Schools
- Innellan and Toward Primary Schools
- Keills and Small Isles Primary Schools
- Lochdonhead and Ulva Primary Schools
- Oban High School, Tiree Primary School and Tiree High School
- Rothesay Joint Campus and St Andrew's Primary School

Head Teachers of 3-18 schools have also been in place nationally for some time now. In Argyll and Bute we currently have five, 3-18 and Joint Campus schools. The Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC) consisting of eight local authorities (i.e. Shetland, Orkney, Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, Argyll and Bute, and Eilean Siar (Western Isles) council areas) have shared headships where one Head Teacher has leadership responsibilities for two or more schools, with the exception of Aberdeen City. A Research Report from the University of Aberdeen was commissioned by the RIC into "*Shared Headships across the Northern Alliance*". The recommendations from this Report, when published, will be considered for our existing and future shared headships in Argyll and Bute.

- 5.10 Many other education authorities across Scotland have been looking at similar approaches due to experiencing similar issues and challenges as those currently being faced in Argyll and Bute, as set out above (e.g. Western Isles).
- 5.11 In November 2018 the Head Teacher Recruitment Working Group Report and Next Steps was published. This working group was established due to the apparent reduction in the number of applicants for Head Teacher posts across Scotland and to outline possible solutions to remedy the situation. This report included 13 recommendations and whilst progress was made towards the implementation of a number of the recommendations set out in the 2018 report, this work was paused as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The publication can be accessed using this link:

<https://www.gov.scot/groups/headteachers-recruitment-and-retention-working-group/>

Concerns continued to be raised by a number of stakeholders in relation to the recruitment and retention of Head Teachers, and in response to these concerns being shared at the Strategic Board for Teacher Education (SBTE), a commitment was made to convene a new refocused and revitalised Head Teacher Recruitment and Retention Working Group in order to drive forward further work to address improvements in this area through solution focussed actions. This working group met for the first time in January 2022 and its

purpose is to develop an action plan to help improve the recruitment and retention of Head Teachers in Scotland. The working group is engaging with school leaders to inform its work and will focus on the following four key themes: Attractiveness of the Head Teacher role (including workload and sustaining Head Teachers in post); Career journey; Data sharing; and System resilience. The action plan to be produced by this working group will be used to support the recruitment and retention of Head Teachers in Argyll and Bute.

- 5.12 The Covid-19 pandemic generated an increase in virtual education delivery during that period. However, it is proposed that this will continue to be developed and adopted as a new way of working moving forward given the increased use, feasibility and accessibility of digital learning to ensure equity of access to provision for children and young people regardless of place or context.

6.0 JUNE 2021 – COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE DECISION

- 6.1 At their meeting on 10th June 2021, the Community Services Committee considered a report pack setting out the key findings of ten workstreams which were undertaken as part of the Education Change Programme along with an update from the Executive Director with responsibility for Education who advised of representations received from members of the public regarding the proposals contained within the report pack.

- 6.2 Following consideration of the above, the Committee agreed to:

- a) Request that the Executive Director with responsibility for Education progresses with a programme of engagement with our communities, our staff and their representative bodies and the wider group of stakeholders in relation to the school leadership model.
- b) Request that the Executive Director with responsibility for Education reports back to a future meeting of the Committee on the outcomes from the engagement action, before progressing these elements of the Education Change Programme.
- c) Note that the remaining elements of the programme which require decisions from Members would be brought forward as part of the further report agreed in terms of recommendations 1 and 2 above.

- 6.3 In terms of Part (c) of the above decision, remaining parts of the Education Change Programme which require further consideration and decisions by Members will be brought before the Committee in the form of subsequent reports at the relevant times.

7. ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 7.1 Following the June 2021 Committee decision (set out in Section 6, above), the Council commissioned external engagement specialists, Stand, to assist in the coordination and facilitation of the consultation and engagement exercise. Stand were procured in May 2021 via a competitive tendering process using the Scottish

Government's Creative Services Framework and have a client base that spans the public and private sector.

- 7.2 At the outset of the consultation exercise, a website¹⁰ was published that explained the proposal in a way that was accessible and easy to understand and provided clear ways for people to ask questions and have their say. It also provided the full engagement timetable. A document could be downloaded from the website describing the proposal in full. Variations on that document were created for consultation with specific groups, each tailored for its own audience (e.g. Head Teachers, or school pupils, etc.).
- 7.3 The Empowering Our Educators website was published on 29th November 2021 and the Council's social media channels were used to promote awareness to the general public.
- 7.4 Audience-specific documents were disseminated through the website to particular audiences:
- 29th November 2021 – Parent and Community Councils
 - 29th November 2021 – Elected Members
 - 3rd December 2021 – Head Teachers and school enquiries email addresses to disseminate to school staff (prior engagement on the proposal was conducted with Head Teachers in focus group scenarios).
- 7.5 All Head Teachers in Argyll and Bute were invited to a series of workshop sessions on 26th October – 2nd November 2021 with the Heads of Service for Education to explore the context and reasons for change. Following that, our Head Teachers were engaged in groups of three to six to review the proposal (11th – 25th November 2021). 94% of Head Teachers across the local authority took part in these sessions. The remainder, who were unavailable through illness, and/or recently appointed Head Teachers, attended sessions on 14th February and 4th March 2022.
- 7.6 Consultation with Head Teachers included a second round of engagement. With the opportunity once again for Head Teachers to come together in small groups to share their views. These sessions took place from 17th – 26th March 2022.
- 7.7 There was a dedicated area on the Empowering Our Educators website for school staff. Materials explaining the proposal and how it would affect them were shared with all school staff via direct email and general school enquiries emails, and also disseminated by their Head Teachers.
- 7.8 Three webinars for school staff took place on 15th February, 22nd February, and 14th March 2022 respectively. The webinars were led by the Education Heads of Service and the Education Manager (Transformation). Attendance and engagement at those sessions was high.

¹⁰ www.empoweringoureducators.co.uk

- 7.9 Education managers and officers in the Council's central Education Team participated in facilitated sessions during the week beginning 29th November 2021. Sessions were also held for the Educational Psychology, Inclusion and Equity, Early Years and School Support teams with an opportunity to find out more about the proposals and ask questions of the Heads of Service.
- 7.10 Consultation with the relevant Trade Unions and Professional Associations went on throughout the consultation period. On 29th and 30th November 2021, Trade Unions and professional association members were invited to an information and discussion session. Following on from this, the Heads of Education and Education Manager (Transformation) met with AHDS, SLS and EIS regional representatives to present the proposal and answer questions. A joint meeting of Trade Union Representatives was held on the 9th December 2021 with individual follow up meetings: EIS – 9th February 2022; AHDS - 9th February 2022 and 9th March 2022.
- 7.11 Engagement is ongoing with the Joint Services Committee, the four weekly meeting of Trade Union, professional associations, HR and the Education Service where the proposals and consultation are a standard agenda item.
- 7.12 Five Q&A sessions were hosted for chairpersons of Community Councils and Parent Councils between 21st and 28th January 2022. The Heads of Service and Education Manager (Transformation) presented the proposal and answered questions from a total of 93 chairpersons from across Argyll and Bute at these sessions.
- 7.13 Thereafter, chairpersons were encouraged to share details of the proposal with their Community Councils and Parent Councils for discussion, and feedback in a structured fashion through the Empowering Our Educators website. The Council offered the support of an education professional from the Education Services team to attend their discussions and answer any questions. 37 Community Councils and Parent Councils took that offer up.
- 7.14 Elected members were invited to attend sessions, held between mid-December 2021 and mid-January 2022, with the Heads of Service and Education Manager (Transformation) to explore the proposal, give feedback, and have their questions answered one-to-one. Twenty one Councillors engaged with the four sessions held.
- 7.15 A briefing was held for members of the local press and representatives of community newsletters on 25th January 2022. An interview was also arranged with the Times Education Supplement on 16th February 2022 attended by the Heads of Service, the Education Transformation Manager and the Business Improvement Manager.
- 7.16 All parents/carers of children and young people in Argyll and Bute schools received a summary of the proposal titled '*In a Nutshell*' via the Xpressions app/email on 4th February 2022. This was also shared with all school staff by email.

- 7.17 The Chief Executive, Executive Director with responsibility for Education, Education Heads of Service and Education Manager (Transformation) met with Jenni Minto MSP and Jackie Baillie MSP to discuss the proposals on 15th February and 25th March 2022 respectively. A meeting was also attended by the Education Heads of Service and Education Manager (Transformation) with Fearghal Kelly, Scottish Government representative, on the 28th March 2022 to discuss aspects of the proposed leadership model.
- 7.18 The facility was provided for any individual to book a one-to-one call with an education professional from the Council to personally discuss the proposal. This opportunity was promoted through local press and social media. 28 such calls were held during the consultation period.
- 7.19 Questions and feedback on the proposal continue to arrive through the website and via email to support@empoweringoureducators.co.uk. To date over 400 emails and enquiries have been received and responded to.
- 7.20 Three sets of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been collated, responded to and published. December questions were collated and responded to in FAQ 1, published through the website on 6th January 2022. January questions were collated and responded to in FAQ 2, published through the website on 4th February 2022. February questions were collated and responded to in FAQ 3, published through the website on 4th March 2022.
- 7.21 The Council met with representatives of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant on the 8th February 2022 to discuss the proposal and explore opportunities for promoting Gaelic culture and language in the proposed school collectives. This was followed up by consultation sessions offered specifically to parents of children and young people in Gaelic Medium Education on 22nd March 2022. A fourth set of FAQs was also published on 11th March 2022 specifically for Gaelic related questions – both in English and Gaelic.
- 7.22 The Executive Director, Policy Lead and Heads of Service met with Diocese and SCES representatives to discuss the proposal in relation to denominational education in Argyll and Bute on the 28th May 2021. The Education Manager (Transformation) held a follow up meeting on the 8th February 2022.
- 7.23 The proposals were shared with the Armed Forces and Community Partnership at their meeting on 25th February 2022.
- 7.24 Age and context appropriate materials explaining the proposal were provided to all Head Teachers in Argyll and Bute for them to share, supporting Pupil Council engagement in every school. These materials could also be viewed by the public on the website. Pupil Councils had their own section in the Empowering our Educators website, including presentations, videos and feedback forms. These were developed through focus groups with pupils and feedback from teachers and Head Teachers across the Authority.
- 7.25 The Education Service's Inclusion and Equity Team liaised with Head Teachers with regard to engagement with ASN pupils across the local authority, offering

additional support or further differentiated materials where there was a request for this.

- 7.26 The consultation was primarily conducted via the Empowering our Educators website. That contained clear guidance on how to submit feedback in a structured and meaningful manner. This also protected the integrity of the collected responses and ensured that nothing was missed – with all responses being stored securely and backed up.
- 7.27 However, feedback did also arrive through other channels. The Council agreed to accept feedback in whichever form it arrived. The Council committed to acknowledging every piece of feedback received, but could not guarantee receipt of feedback which was not submitted through the correct channels (i.e. the website or the support@empoweringoureducators.co.uk email address).
- 7.28 The consultation and engagement exercise was open for responses until 31st March 2022. The consultation period was extended twice – to 4th March 2022, and latterly to 31st March 2022 to allow more time for stakeholder engagement. The pupil consultation exercise remained open until 1st April 2022.

8. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS FROM CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- 8.1 The raw feedback data from the consultation was collated and analysed. As per the Scottish Government's Consultation Good Practice Guidance, the Council used an external agency, Stand, to ensure the integrity of the collected raw data. Stand collated and analysed the data and produced a report on this for consideration by the Education Service, which is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration.
- 8.2 Overall there were 804 responses to the consultation, with the majority (93%) of these being submitted via the dedicated response form on the Empowering our Educators online portal. The remaining responses were emailed in a variety of formats. Irrespective of how responses were made, all were considered and analysed in a consistent and equitable manner.
- 8.3 The response rate is very encouraging and illustrates the high level of engagement with this Argyll and Bute focussed consultation. To put this into perspective, there were 1,291 responses received for the recent Scotland wide consultation undertaken by the Scottish Government in respect of the National Care Service (NCS). One of the themes emerging from the findings is criticism of the consultation process, including concerns about a perceived lack of engagement and that the consultation period was not long enough. The Scottish Government consultation process was identified by some respondents as best practice and having regard to their approach, it can be argued that the consultation and engagement exercise undertaken by the Education Service was certainly no less extensive and inclusive, as set out in Section 7, above. For example, the Scottish Government facilitated 34 events as part of the national NCS consultation which ran over a 12 week period; whereas this

consultation ran for 17 weeks and facilitated in excess of 120 events across stakeholder groups (excludes sessions facilitated by school staff for pupils).

- 8.4 The findings of the consultation are set out within the report attached at Appendix 1, and Members are encouraged to read this in detail. The purpose of this covering report is to provide a general overview of the level of engagement and the responses received from the various stakeholders who took the time to engage in the process. It is also important to highlight some contextual factors which impacted upon and distorted the consultation process.
- 8.5 The promotion of misinformation, for example by lobbying bodies, and a campaign by the largest teaching union, was an issue from the outset, even prior to the proposals being issued to stakeholders and the consultation going live. This unfortunately led to stakeholders being misinformed in respect to key aspects of the proposals. For example, it was widely promoted that the proposals included plans to remove Head Teacher posts from schools, claims of illegality with regard to the creation of Executive Heads, risks of school closure, and reductions in pupil/teacher ratios and contact time. As the consultation process developed, the Education Service and wider project team spent an increasing amount of effort addressing questions and concerns around the misinformation in circulation, which was disruptive and detracted from the real focus of the consultation.
- 8.6 We made efforts to involve a wide range of stakeholders in order to hear individual, local area voices as much as possible. The analysis report indicates that individual voices may have been lost to a certain degree. For example, the lobbying activity resulted in evidence of very similar phrases/responses being submitted by a number of Parent Councils, and Community Councils, rather than responses distinct to and reflective of their different local areas. This is a concern as one of the key roles of Parent Councils is to represent and provide the views of all parents.
- 8.7 It is also evident that there continues to be a mistrust of the Council and Education Service in general, which has manifested itself via this exercise and, coupled with the promotion of misinformation, has resulted in a highly negative response to the proposals.
- 8.8 The findings report illustrates that a number of common themes have emerged from the consultation responses, with the majority of these being specific to the Education Service and the proposals. However, it is recognised that there are wider social and economic issues such as recruitment and housing, which could prevent the model from being implemented effectively, and that such challenges can be compounded within island communities. These are nationally recognised issues, which require a multi-agency approach across Argyll and Bute. Further reference to these wider challenges is made at Section 5, above, and within the Island Communities Impact Assessment attached at Appendix 2 of this report.
- 8.9 Furthermore, it is important to note that whilst the focus on this consultation was on the future direction of the Education Service, there are a wide range of

contextual factors which impact on the Council, and local government/the public sector as a whole. In addition to the aforementioned issues around recruitment and housing, other factors include the Resource Spending Review, national education reform, cost of living pressures, and the demographic challenges that Argyll and Bute faces - including a declining and ageing population. All of these complex issues contribute to the ever changing environment that councils operate within and the need to be proactive in order to continually adapt and be 'on the front foot'. In such circumstances the 'status quo' is not a suitable option.

8.9.1 As per the "COSLA – Respect our Communities" Report¹¹ – page 6 – "Councils have less flexibility in how they use funding. (Revenue) Funding dedicated to national policy initiatives, increased from £1 billion in 2019/20 to £1.5 billion in 2020/21, equating to 14.1 per cent of council funding from the Scottish Government."¹² According to the report, in 2020-21 there was £482m less general, undirected grant funding when compared to 2013/14. What appears as a cash increase is for new policies - Early Learning and Childcare, free personal care, health and social care integration - and commitments like teachers' pay and pensions, pupil/teacher ratio. This approach impacts how local authorities deliver sustainable services that can fully support communities.

8.10 Respondents to the consultation can be categorised as follows:-

8.10.1 Pupils

All Primary and Secondary School Pupil Councils were engaged as part of the consultation with age appropriate presentations and videos, which were developed through focus groups with pupils and feedback from Teachers/Head Teachers across the Authority. The consultation sessions were facilitated independently by their Teachers, with pupils being asked what they liked and disliked about the proposals. Overall, responses were received from 53 Pupil Councils.

Of all the respondents to the consultation as a whole, the feedback from our children and young people can be viewed as being the most balanced, with considered responses being given to the perceived positive and negative elements of the proposals. The responses also illustrated the kind and caring nature of pupils across Argyll and Bute, with many considering the potential impact of the proposals on their peers and teachers.

The key headlines emerging from the consultation and engagement with pupils can be located on pages 148-175 of the findings report.

8.10.2 School staff

For the purposes of the consultation this stakeholder group included Head Teachers, middle leadership (depute head, faculty head or Principal Teacher

¹¹ https://www.cosla.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0006/23010/Respect-our-communities-protect-our-funding-Jan-21.pdf

¹² Source: Audit Scotland Local Government in Scotland Overview 2020

role), Teachers, Early Years staff, non-teaching staff and classroom support staff. 169 responses were received, which represents an 8.2% response rate.

As set out in Section 7, above, this group of staff were engaged via a number of different methods - including group workshops, one to one sessions and email communications, with a dedicated area set up on the Empowering Our Educators website.

The main benefits of the model identified by school staff as a whole were (i) more collaboration between schools, (ii) giving Heads more time to lead schools, instead of having them teach as well, (iii) sharing specialisms with neighbouring schools, and (iv) more teachers in classrooms. However, when asked whether they felt the model will positively affect the future education of young people in Argyll and Bute 67% strongly disagreed or disagreed with this, 16.2% strongly agreed or agreed, and the remaining 16.8% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The key headlines emerging from the consultation and engagement with school staff can be located at pages 48-147 of the Report. One of the key recommendations arising from the findings report, based on the outcome of the consultation with Head Teachers, is that any further development of the model should be carried out exclusively with this stakeholder group to ensure that their needs are met.

8.10.3 Community bodies

One hundred and five responses were received from community bodies across Argyll and Bute, including Community Councils (27 responses), Parent Councils (76 responses) and 2 individual employers/organisations.

Representatives of these bodies were emailed on 29th November 2021 with audience specific materials detailing the proposals and how to engage with the process. Chairpersons were encouraged to share the proposals/toolkit with their respective bodies and arrange for all independent feedback to be collated, representing all views. The Education Service offered the support of educational professionals to attend their discussions and answer any questions. This offer was taken up by 37 Community Councils and Parent Councils. Five specific Q&A sessions were also held between 21st and 28th January 2022, hosting 93 Chairs/representatives of community groups. The one-to-one 20 minute sessions with an educational professional were also available to this group of stakeholders.

In general there was a reluctance from this group of stakeholders to use the dedicated response form. This was mainly based on the misunderstanding that the benefits section of the form was a mandatory field and required to be completed, which was not the case. On this basis, a large proportion of the responses from community groups were submitted outwith the Empowering Our Educators portal. It is concerning to note that the majority of responses from community groups appear to have been heavily influenced by misinformation promoted by a number of lobbyists. As a result, a significant proportion responded to the proposals with broad, non-school specific content.

One of the key roles of a Parent Council is to represent the views of the entire parent forum but unfortunately, it appears that only some voices are reflected - some parents expressed their concern about not being consulted or their positive views had not been captured in the overall response submitted.

The key headlines emerging from the consultation and engagement with community bodies can be located on Pages 176-201 of the findings Report.

8.10.4 Public bodies and community groups

Responses were received from the following public bodies and community groups:-

- Diocese of Argyll and the Isles
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig
- Comann nam Pàrant
- The Educational Institute of Scotland
- Association of Head Teachers and Deputes in Scotland (AHDS)
- School Leaders Scotland (SLS)
- Joint Union response – Oban High School
- Argyll and Bute Community Network for Carers of Care Experienced Children
- North West Mull Community Woodland Company
- Wise4All

As detailed in Section 7, above, the Education Service consulted with the relevant Trade Unions and Professional Associations throughout the consultation period, including AHDS, EIS, SLS and JSC representatives. Meetings were also held with the Diocese and representatives from SCES on several occasions to discuss the implications of the proposal for denominational education in Argyll and Bute.

The key headlines emerging from the consultation and engagement with this stakeholder group can be found on pages 202-215 of the findings report.

8.10.5 Public

A total of 478 responses were received from the public. For the purposes of this consultation exercise, that wider stakeholder group can be broken down as follows:-

Parents, guardians or carers – 387 responses
Residents of Argyll and Bute – 87 responses
Non-resident of Argyll and Bute – 2 responses
Primary pupil – 1 response
Secondary school pupil – 1 response

In addition to the engagement parents, guardians and carers should have had from their respective Parent Councils, they also received details of the

proposals directly from the Education Service via email or the Xpressions Application used to communicate with all parents of Argyll and Bute pupils. Local press and Social Media were also utilised to promote the consultation to the wider public.

In line with Community Groups, the public were reluctant to use the dedicated response form, based on the misunderstanding that the benefits section of the form was a mandatory field and required to be completed, which was not the case. It is apparent that the responses from the public were heavily influenced by the wide range of misinformation which was promoted by a few lobbying activists.

The main benefits of the model identified by this stakeholder group as a whole were (i) sharing specialisms with neighbouring schools, (ii) more collaboration between schools, and (iii) more equality between schools with resources better shared. This is comparative to the responses received from community groups. However, when asked whether they felt the model will positively affect the future education of young people in Argyll and Bute 82% strongly disagreed or disagreed, 11% strongly agreed/agreed and the remaining 7% neither agreed nor disagreed.

The key headlines emerging from the consultation and engagement with this stakeholder group can be found on pages 216-245 of the findings report.

- 8.11 The preceding paragraphs provide a flavour of the feedback that has been received from each stakeholder group. Members are asked to consider this commentary, alongside the full report, produced at Appendix 1. In addition a copy of the raw data/responses can be found on the Empowering Our Educators website [here](#). It should be noted that personal data has been redacted in line with the requirements of data protection legislation.

9. CONCLUSION

- 9.1 The view of the Education Service is that the consultation exercise has highlighted that there are a number of risks that are being faced, and will continue to be faced, by the Service - specifically in relation to the current leadership model for education, the Service's ongoing work to deliver improvement, implications of national reform that the Service will require to address, key issues raised by stakeholders as part the consultation process, and other local and national challenges that the Service are encountering and will continue to encounter.
- 9.2 If the above challenges cannot be effectively addressed and the 'status quo' remains, there are a number of risks associated with this for the Council as Education Authority, including becoming reactive to changes in the educational landscape at a local and national level:
- a) A prosperous and inclusive economy lies at the heart of council priorities notwithstanding the challenges that we face e.g. demographic and housing challenges. Our Education Service faces population challenges and these

are evidenced by our school roll projections which vary across our geographical areas but are declining overall. School roll projections can be found in Appendix 4.

- b) While there are some areas within Argyll and Bute where populations are growing, these are exceptions to the wider trends across the area. Our total population is falling, and the age profile is changing. In short, we are getting older.

This is a trend that can be traced back over several decades. According to the mid-year estimates for 2020 (published by NRS), just under 16,000 (16% of our population) people in Argyll and Bute were aged between 0 and 19 years of age. This compares to just over 21,000 (23%) in 2000. This can be compared to the proportion of the population aged 45 and over in both years and who, on the basis of their age, are unlikely to have additional children. In 2000, there were just over 40,900 (45% of the population) aged 45 and over. In 2020, there were just under 48,000 people (56% of the population) in this age group.

Numbers of births each year have been falling in Argyll and Bute over time. In 2000, 792 births were recorded in our area. In 2020, the number of births was 592, a decrease of 25%. Although, post-COVID, people may be looking to relocate to rural areas, it is too early to say what the impact of these moves may be. However, it is unlikely that they will be enough to offset the wider demographic challenges our area faces.

- c) Council spending on primary and secondary education across Scotland increased by 5.1 per cent in real terms between 2013/14 and 2018/19, from £4.1 billion to £4.3 billion. Most of the real-terms increase in spend can be attributed to the Attainment Scotland Fund, which the Scottish Government set up in 2015/16 to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When this is excluded, real-terms spending increased by 0.7 per cent during the period, to just over £4.1 billion. The Scottish Government had put over £200 million of extra money into Covid-19 mitigation measures and education recovery by early January 2021¹³. This includes:

- £80m to recruit teachers and support staff over 2 years.
- £50m for costs associated with health measures, enhanced cleaning and other logistics.
- £25m to provide digital devices and internet connections to schools.
- £1.5m capital funding for school transport.
- An additional £45m in January 2021 for recruiting additional staff, additional digital devices and providing additional family support.

The Scottish Government has indicated that it expects councils to be able to retain the additional teacher posts in future by funding them through other teachers retiring and leaving the profession. COSLA has highlighted potential risks with this approach if teachers do not leave at the rate

¹³ Source: *Audit Scotland – Improving Outcomes for Young People through School Education*

expected which will cause a shortfall in funding for councils and be a pressure on education budgets. In addition, councils have reported that they do not expect the £50m for logistics to be sufficient to meet the additional costs of Covid-19 measures placing pressure on education budgets.

- d) Future funding for the Education Service is unknown and a flexible approach may be required with the reorientation of resource a key aspect of meeting future challenges.
- e) The Standard for Headship qualification became a prerequisite for teachers taking up their first permanent Head Teacher post in local authority and grant-aided schools in Scotland on 1st August 2020. In circumstances where the Education Service appoint a candidate without the Standard for Headship qualification, and this is not achieved within the specified 30 month period, there is a risk that this post will then become vacant again. A loss of staff expertise as a result of recruitment or retention issues will negatively impact the delivery of excellence and equity to our children and young people.
- f) There are variations in outcomes achieved by young people across Argyll and Bute. This reflects the national picture across the 32 Local Authorities (Appendix 5). One of the key recommendations in the Audit Scotland Report by the ICEA (International Council of Education Advisors) is of *“a theory of change and leadership approaches that emphasise distributed responsibility and engagement, professional judgment and agency, robust collaborative professionalism, and local energy and ownership”*. It was the intention, through the leadership proposal consulted on, that the Executive Head Teachers would support us to make better use of data to focus and work with their Head Teacher colleagues to drive improvement activity at school and local level making informed choices and decisions. In turn, Executive Head Teachers would work with central Officers to drive improvement activity at regional and national level to deliver excellence and equity for all of our children and young people regardless of place or context.

Data reflective of both the national and local picture of outcomes for children and young people can be found in Appendix 5. Further analysis of outcomes for our children and young people of Argyll and Bute can be found in our Education Strategic Plan 2022-2024, which is detailed at Agenda Item 6 of this Community Services Committee pack.

- g) There is scope for further improvement to our school inspection outcomes and to consistency of grading at Very Good and above. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there were no graded inspections conducted by Education Scotland during April 2020 - August 2022, with Inspection Report publications ending in June 2020. During Covid-19, Education Scotland engaged with schools on recovery visits. Argyll and Bute school engagement can be accessed at Agenda item 25 of this Community Services Committee pack.

The table below provides an overview of inspection outcomes from January 2019 - June 2020 at national, regional and local levels. A total of 544 school inspections were conducted nationally, 124 of these were conducted

regionally (Northern Alliance partners) and 23 of these were conducted locally within Argyll and Bute. It evidences that the majority of Argyll and Bute school outcomes are graded at Good and Satisfactory whilst nationally the majority of outcomes are graded at Very good and Good. We must ensure that the time to focus and collaborate on leadership of change and strategic priorities to deliver excellence in learning and teaching both within and across our geographical areas is available to our Head Teachers.

Quality Indicator (QI) - Grading January 2019 – June 2020			
QI 1.3 – Leadership of Change	National	Regional	Local
Number of Schools Inspected	397	124	23
Excellent	3	0	0
Very Good	47	3	0
Good	93	23	5
Satisfactory	63	30	5
Weak	12	11	2
Unsatisfactory	3	0	0
QI 2.3 – Learning, Teaching and Assessment			
Number of Schools Inspected	397	124	23
Excellent	0	3	0
Very Good	56	4	0
Good	198	50	9
Satisfactory	124	52	13
Weak	19	15	1
Unsatisfactory	0	0	0
QI 3.2 – Raising Attainment and Achievement			
Number of Schools Inspected	397	124	23
Excellent	3	2	0
Very Good	59	8	0
Good	194	49	13
Satisfactory	117	51	7
Weak	24	13	3
Unsatisfactory	0	1	0
QI 3.1 – Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion			
Number of Schools Inspected	221	67	12
Excellent	3	0	0
Very Good	57	8	1
Good	102	36	4
Satisfactory	50	15	7
Weak	7	8	0
Unsatisfactory	2	0	0

As Education Scotland resume school inspections in September 2022 using their existing models of both short and long inspections we will continue to work with them to evaluate and improve the performance of our schools. Inspection data is contained in Appendix 6.

- h) From 2017-22 there has been an overall fall in school rolls by geographical area, with the exception of Oban, Lorn and the Isles, as illustrated below:

Geographical Area	Overall % change in Primary and Secondary Roll over 5 years¹ (2017/18 to 2021/22)
Bute and Cowal	-2.31%
Helensburgh and Lomond	-5.34%
Mid Argyll and Kintyre	-0.29%
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	+0.75%
Overall % Change	-1.97%

The table below indicates the overall % change in roll over 5 years by sector:

Geographical Area	Primary		Secondary	
	Overall % change in Roll over 5 years¹	Increase/Decrease #pupils	Overall % change in Roll over 5 years¹	Increase/Decrease #pupils
Bute and Cowal	-10.82%	-140	9.19%	88
Helensburgh and Lomond	-7.77%	-136	-2.54%	-32
Mid Argyll and Kintyre	0.75%	10	-1.51%	-17
Oban, Lorn and the Isles	-5.60%	-83	9.73%	102
% Change	-5.96%	-349	3.21%	141

Pupil Projections for Scotland and Local Authorities 2022-2027 indicate a further drop in overall Primary roll from 5,500 pupils to 4,600 pupils in 2027. As our school rolls fall, there is likely to be impact on the leadership structure of a school as per local and national SNCT agreements. Currently we have 7 primary schools where the leadership post of DHT has been lost or is at risk. This is and will continue to negatively impact middle leadership roles that support a Head Teacher when leading change and improvement. Given the significant amount of national education reform to take place this is a risk to the delivery of excellence and equity. School roll data can be found in Appendix 4.

- i) Scottish Education is undergoing a significant period of national education reform. Within Argyll and Bute, the Education Service must respond to both the policy and legislative requirements from the Scottish Parliament. The status quo is not an option and creative and innovative solutions will be required to deliver the future

vision for Scottish Education as reported on by Professor Ken Muir - "*Putting Learners at the Centre*".

- j) Implementing reform requires leaders to have increased time to focus on strategy rather than operational matters. Every Head Teacher speaks of the pressure of their current workload throughout their feedback. They currently report an upward trend in working hours that is difficult to manage and, without change to our current leadership model, an increase in working hours is likely. This could lead to a reduction in staff morale, wellbeing and commitment with the implementation of national education reform which would only add to their workload.
- k) If we retain the status quo of teaching heads then time to enhance their focus on ensuring high quality learning and teaching and increased collaboration among practitioners, as recommended by national education reform, will not be available.
- l) Staff cover requirements can impact a Head Teacher's ability to concentrate on their core work and impact on their time to lead teaching and learning. Without reorientation of resource to recruit additional teachers to remove or significantly reduce cover requirements, Head Teachers will continue to support cover in classrooms.
- m) If there are insufficient opportunities for Head Teachers to actively engage in national education reform due to current and increasing workload this may lead to increasing uncertainty for them.
- n) Implementing national education reform at a local level will require sufficient resource and capacity for that change to be delivered within the existing remits and responsibilities of our Head Teachers. Without reorientation of resource, additional funding may be required.
- o) The inability to recruit Head Teachers to schools of low numbers as a result of the salary arising from the national job sizing toolkit. This is likely to have a particular impact on our rural and island schools and the sustainability of the delivery of education in some areas. For example, the salary for a Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher on scale point 1 (SCP1) is £52,350. Using the national job sizing toolkit our schools with the lowest roll numbers tend to result in the salary for a Head Teacher of £53,964. A Depute Head Teacher in a school with a larger roll placed on SCP3 would receive a salary of £55,740. This can prevent Depute Head Teachers from applying for Head Teacher posts and undertaking the additional responsibilities of that post.
- p) It is imperative that we continue to strive for excellence and equity for our children and young people across Argyll and Bute, regardless of place or context. Adapting our current leadership model in light of the above risks that are being, or are about to be, experienced by our schools will ensure that we are able to implement national education reform as it unfolds and can respond agilely to it. Changing our leadership model in light of national education reform will support us to sustain our small schools in their local communities, raise attainment and develop our future leaders. The status quo is not an option. The Education

Service continues its commitment in striving to deliver the best possible outcomes for the children and young people of Argyll and Bute, in line with Members' ambitions and the changing national landscape of education.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 Policy: The recommendations as set out in this report fit with both national and local education policy.
- 10.2 Financial: Projected costs and other financial information is as set out in the above report.
- 10.3 Legal: The Education Authority are examining the issues and challenges as set out in this report. Adopting the report's recommendations will ensure that the Authority continues to fulfil its statutory duties.
- 10.4 HR: Full and detailed consultation has taken place, and will continue to take place, with Trade Unions.
- 10.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to the proposal which is attached as **Appendix 3**.
 - 10.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics
 - 10.5.2 Socio-economic Duty
 - 10.5.3 Islands: An Islands Communities Impact Assessment has been carried out in relation to the proposal and is attached as **Appendix 2**.
- 10.6 Climate Change: None
- 10.7 Risk: Every effort will be taken to mitigate risks if and when officers are directed to progress with the recommendations as set out in this report.
- 10.8 Customer Service: Delivering an improved Education Service for the benefit of our children, young people, and all other school users is the paramount consideration of this report.

Douglas Hendry - Executive Director with responsibility for Education

Policy Lead: Councillor Yvonne McNeilly

12th August 2022

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Stand Consultation Findings Report

Appendix 2: Island Community Impact Assessment (ICIA)

Appendix 3: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment (EQSEIA)

Appendix 4: School Roll Data

Appendix 5: Attainment Data

Appendix 6: Inspection Data