Our vision is to have a sustainable population and socially and economically thriving communities with a focus on our quality of life, natural heritage, and Gàidhlig language and culture.

EDUCATION

SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN

For the Period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

1.1. I am pleased to introduce the Service Business Plan (SBP) for 2025/26 which sets out our outcomes and priorities for the coming year. The SBP is the main annual business planning document for the Education Service. It reflects the Comhairle's key priorities as set out in the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 and provides an overview of the Service's main areas of activity.

1.2. The Service is committed to providing an excellent education for all children and young people in the Western Isles through high quality provision and experiences in learning and teaching for all children. This is supported by the use of a range of quality indicators and standards which enable the service to identify best practice and areas for development thus ensuring continuous improvement. The five service areas within Education help to ensure that the Comhairle operates successfully in an increasingly complex and challenging environment, and although diverse, each service is essential to the running of the council and the delivery of its vision, values and priorities.

1.3. **Early Years and Pre-School** provide education, learning and teaching support for all children from birth to 5 years. Early Years leads on the Department's responsibilities for the effective implementation of the Early Years and Early Intervention Childcare Strategy, inclusive of Childcare provision, 3-5 years provision and family support.

1.4. **E-Sgoil** provides equitable access to high-quality interactive, online learning using technology to remove barriers and improve outcomes for young people. It seeks to support schools to offer a wide-ranging and resilient curricular offer in response to learner needs.

1.5. **Executive Headteachers** are an integral part of Western Isles Schools and are the leaders in teaching and learning for 3 geographical groups of primary schools along with being the line managers for the Heads of School and the remaining Head Teachers for these groups of primary schools.

1.6. **Quality Improvement (Secondary, Digital and Attainment)** provides support to schools to undertake quality assurance interventions designed to improve attainment and achievement.

1.7. **Schools** provide education, learning and teaching support for all children from 5 to 18 years covering the eight curriculum areas along with literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. This is split into the Broad General Education phase, up to Secondary 3, and the Senior Phase, up to Secondary 6. In the Senior Phase pupils choose the academic and vocational qualifications that they wish to pursue.

Donald A. Macleod
Chief Officer, Education Service

KEY AREAS OF RISK FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

2.1 The Comhairle currently recognises three levels of risk: Strategic risk aligned to the Comhairle's Corporate Strategy; Operational risk aligned to SBPs; and Project risk concerned with specific projects.

2.2 Operational risks represent threats that may affect the achievement of SBP actions, and Education has identified significant risks for the coming year which shall be reviewed periodically throughout the year.

2.3 The Initial Risk Matrix at Figure 1 represents the current risk profile of the Service, and the Revised Risk Matrix represents the target risk profile once risk actions have been successfully implemented. 2.4 contains a list of identified risks, categorised by risk treatment.

Figure 1: Education Operational Risks
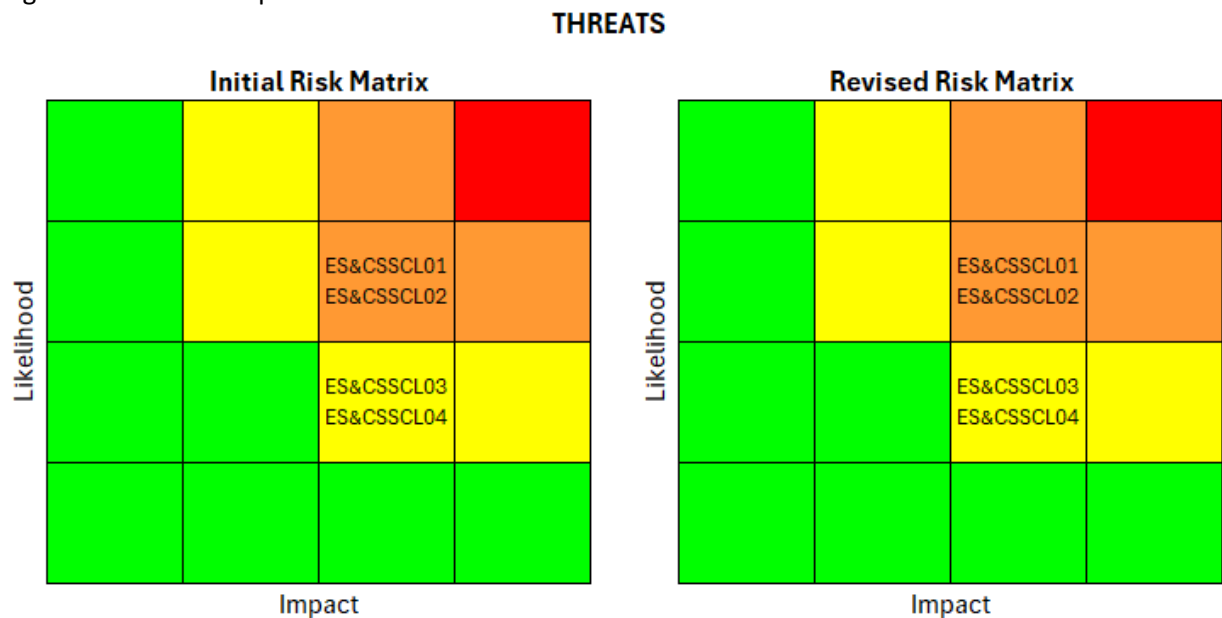
THREATS

2.4 The Service has identified four significant threats, and these are listed below categorised by Risk Treatment:

Risks retained (acceptable level of risk)
4 risks identified are at an acceptable level and will continue to be monitored:
- ES&CSSCL01 Inability to staff educational settings to the required levels.
- ES&CSSCL02 Inability to recruit GME secondary and primary teachers and other non-teaching support staff including those in ELC settings.
- ES&CSSCL03 e-Sgoil service reduces or stops.
- ES&CSSCL04 Gaelic Grant reduces or stops.

2.5 Elected Members can view the full risk register in the Comhairle's performance management system, Interplan, within the Integrated Risk Management (IRM) module.

DELIVERING THE SERVICE BUSINESS PLAN AND ACHIEVING BEST VALUE

Strategic Outcomes

3.1 Education contributes to the strategic outcomes listed below to support the delivery of the Comhairle's Strategic Priorities.
- 2.1.1 Attainment rates continuously improve;
- 2.1.2 Early intervention in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe;
- 2.1.3 Schools are centres for lifelong learning and key assets for the community;
- 2.1.4 People are healthy and active;
- 2.1.5 Childcare facilities in place to meet the needs of working parents; and
- 3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted.

Best Value

3.2 In working towards the six strategic outcomes, the service aims to ensure that there is good governance and effective management of resources, with a focus on improvement, to deliver the best possible outcomes for the public and to make arrangements for the reporting to the public of the outcome of the performance of its functions. Table 1 lists the service outcomes established to support the delivery of the Service Business Plan (SBP) and to achieve Best Value.

Table 1: Service Outcomes

Delivering the SBP and achieving Best Value
Service Outcomes
High quality learning and teaching in all educational settings. School leavers achieve a positive destination. Effective and accountable leadership for all. Learners have equality of access to learning opportunities.

MEASURES AND ACTIONS

4.1 The next Best Value thematic focus is transformation, and the Accounts Commission will be auditing councils' plans for transformation as part of the 2024/25 annual audit. As set out in their Transformation in councils report (2024), "councils must prioritise and progress the delivery of their plans for transformation." The Commission's Local government in Scotland: Financial bulletin 2023/24 (2025) highlights that "Scotland's councils continue to face severe financial pressures. The need to consult with communities, clearly communicate the impact on local services, whilst working together to shape and deliver urgently needed transformation, is more important than ever."

4.2 In December 2024, the Account's Commission published a new Statutory Performance Information Direction. Direction 2024 requires the Comhairle to report information about its performance in a way that enables the council to draw comparisons and make judgements in relation to the Comhairle's performance over time in comparison to other councils. The performance measures for Education are detailed in Tables 2-7.

4.3 The Corporate Strategy was reviewed in 2023 to ensure that it continues to state and communicate the ambition, aspirations and commitments of the Comhairle. The overarching aim and ambition of the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 is to retain and increase the population of the Outer Hebrides. It takes account of national priorities and local needs but does not include actions to achieve its strategic

outcomes as these have been developed by the Corporate Management Team and included in the appropriate SBP for monitoring and reporting to ensure that the Comhairle's mission is achieved. The actions for the Service are detailed in Tables 8-11.

How we will measure our performance

4.4   The tables below are grouped by Strategic Priority and include the Corporate Strategy 'Measures of Success' Strategic Outcome KPIs that the service contributes to, the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) SPIs that the service have prioritised for improvement, and the LPIs chosen by the service to strengthen its focus on improvement.

4.5   Each performance measure includes the baseline year and data, the target for 2025/26, and the aspirational target for 2030. The latest corporate performance reports are available on the Comhairle's Best Value Performance Reporting web page.

Strategic Priority 2.1 Support children, families, and young people.

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.1 Attainment rates continuously improve.

Table 2: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.1.CS01 - ECS105 (LGBF: CHN13a): Percentage of primary pupils achieving expected CfE levels in literacy (P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined).	2018/19 67.4%	71%	75%	Schools
2.1.1.CS02 - ECS106 (LGBF: CHN13b): Percentage of primary pupils achieving expected CfE levels in numeracy (P1, P4 and P7 pupils combined).	2018/19 70.6%	76%	76%	Schools
2.1.1.CS03 - ECS181: Percentage of secondary pupils achieving third level or better in all three literacy organisers (S3, 3rd level or better).	2018/19 92.4%	93.5%	95%	Schools
2.1.1.CS04 - ECS148: Percentage of secondary pupils achieving third level or better in numeracy (S3, 3rd level or better).	2018/19 84.1%	91%	95%	Schools
2.1.1.CS05 - ECS182: Percentage of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQF Level 5 or above.	2019/20 93.8%	94%	95%	Schools
2.1.1.CS06 - ECS183: Percentage of school leavers attaining 1 or more award at SCQF Level 6 or above.	2019/20 70.1%	72%	74%	Schools
2.1.1.CS07 - ECS005 (LGBF: CHN4): Percentage of secondary school pupils gaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 5.	2018/19 61%	71%	75%	Schools
2.1.1.CS08 - ECS006 (LGBF: CHN5): Percentage of secondary school pupils gaining 5+ awards at SCQF level 6.	2018/19 33%	35.5%	37%	Schools
2.1.1.CS09 - ECS004 (LGBF: CHN11): Percentage of pupils entering positive destinations upon leaving school.	2018/19 98.4%	98.5%	98.7%	Schools
2.1.1.CS10 - ECS130 (LGBF: CHN19a): School Attendance Rate (per 100 pupils).	2018/19 94%	95%	97%	Schools

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.1.CS11 - ECS132 (LGBF: CHN20a): School Exclusion Rate (per 1,000 pupils).	2010/11 27%	15%	5%	Schools
2.1.1.CS12 - ECS127 (LGBF-CHN21 SLAED-IG6): Percentage of 16–19-year-olds participating in education, training, employment or volunteering work.	2019/20 96%	97%	97.5%	Schools

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.2 Early intervention in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe.

Table 3: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.2.CS01 - ECS184: Pupil teacher ratio, all sectors excluding Early Learning Centres.	2019/20 10.6	10.8	11	Schools
2.1.2.CS02 - ECS185: Percentage of evaluations from Local Authority School Inspection Reports published in the year (Jan-Dec) reporting good or above, excluding nurseries.	2019/20 70%	71%	72%	Schools
2.1.2.CS03 - ECS125 (LGBF-CHN17): Percentage of children meeting developmental milestones at their 27–30-month review.	2019/20 82%	85%	86%	Early Years and Pre-School

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.3 Schools are centres for lifelong learning and key assets for the community.

Table 4: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.3.CS01 - Percentage of adults satisfied with local schools.	2017-20 62%	63%	70%	Schools

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.4 People are healthy and active.

Table 5: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.4.CS06 – ECS208: Percentage of primary schools that met the 120 minutes per week target level of PE provision.	2019 100%	100%	100%	Schools
2.1.4.CS07 – ECS209: Percentage of secondary schools that met the 100 minutes per week target level of PE provision.	2019 100%	100%	100%	Schools

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.5 Childcare facilities in place to meet the needs of working parents.

Table 6: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.5.CS01 - ECS186: Percentage of evaluations from Local Authority Nursery Inspection Reports published reporting good or above on all grades received.	2019/20 45.5%	27%	30%	Early Years and Pre-School

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
2.1.5.CS02 - ECS187: Percentage of Local Authority Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres in the Outer Hebrides.	2019/20 78%	80%	80%	Early Years and Pre-School
2.1.5.CS03 - ECS188: Percentage of pre-school children registered with a Local Authority Early Learning and Childcare facility (ELC) in the Outer Hebrides.	2020 84%	90%	95%	Early Years and Pre-School
2.1.5.CS04 - ECS189: The percentage of pre-school children registered with Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres whose home language is not English.	2019/20 2%	5%	5%	Early Years and Pre-School
2.1.5.CS05 - ECS190: The percentage of pre-school children registered with Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres with Additional Support Needs.	2020 9%	20%	20%	Early Years and Pre-School

Strategic Priority 3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life.

Strategic Outcome: 3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted.

Table 7: Performance Measures

Measure (KPI title)	Baseline	Target 2025/26	Target 2030	Service
3.1.1.CS07 – ECS025: Percentage of children enrolling in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) at P1	2019/20 47%	52%	54%	Schools
3.1.1.CS08 - ECS030: Percentage of children in Gaelic Medium Education (GME)	2019/20 40%	46%	47%	Schools

What actions we will take

4.6 The SBP strengthens the links with the Corporate Strategy and the LOIP. The actions take into consideration the key areas of focus identified at section two whilst focusing on progressing the strategic outcomes.

Strategic Priority: 2.1 Support children, families, and young people.

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.1 Attainment rates continuously improve.

Table 8: SBP Actions

Action	Service
2.1.1.1 Ensure delivery, quality assurance and development of educational provision in accordance with Scotland's Curriculum, the National Improvement Framework and Local Improvement Plans (Including School Improvement Plans)	Schools

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.2 Early intervention in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe.

Table 9: SBP Actions

Action	Service
2.1.2.2 Ensure delivery, quality assurance and development of Education Psychology Services that meet statutory duties and support the outcomes of the Integrated Children's Services Plan.	Schools

Strategic Outcome: 2.1.5 Childcare facilities in place to meet the needs of working parents.

Table 10: SBP Actions

Action	Service
2.1.5.1 Support the provision of childcare across the Western Isles	Early Years and Pre-School

Strategic Priority: 3.1 Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life.

Strategic Outcome: 3.1.1 The Gaelic language, natural heritage and cultural of our communities is supported and promoted.

Table 11: SBP Actions

Action	Service
3.1.1.14 Ensure delivery, quality assurance and development of the Gaelic Action Plan and Comhairle Gaelic First Policy	Early Years and Pre-School

RESOURCING THE PLAN

5.1   The funding and staffing resources identified to implement our SBP is summarised in Tables 12 and 13 as per the budget approved by Comhairle in February 2025 and the annual budget setting salary estimates exercise.

Revenue Budget 2025/26

5.2   Education has a Net Revenue Budget of £42,635,917, which is allocated across the service within the sections detailed in Table 12.

Table 12: Net Revenue Budget 2025/26 by Service Profile

Detail	£	%
Early Years and Pre-School	5,779,019	13.55
e-Sgoil	2,678	0.01
Executive Headteachers	377,598	0.89
Quality Improvement (Secondary, Digital and Attainment)	422,791	0.99
Schools	36,053,831	84.56
Total	**42,635,917**	**100%**

Capital Budget 2025/26

5.3   There is no Capital Budget for Education.

Service Employees

5.4   Education has 603.75 FTE employees working across the service within the sections listed in Table 13. We support these employees to deliver their duties through a range of policies including personal appraisal and a robust training framework.

Table 13: FTE Employees

Service Profile	Number of FTE employees	%
Early Years and Pre-School	119.42	19.78
e-Sgoil	11.18	1.85
Executive Headteachers	2.60	0.43
Quality Improvement (Secondary, Digital and Attainment)	3.00	0.50
Schools	467.55	77.44
Total	603.75	100%

Service Profile	Number of FTE employees	%