



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE PLAN 2024-2030

Report by Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval for the Comhairle's British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2024-2030.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Scottish Government and other public bodies in Scotland to publish BSL plans ("Authority Plans", in English and BSL) setting out how they will promote and support BSL. The Comhairle's first BSL Plan was approved on 2 October 2018 and the respective BSL Progress Report 2018-2024 is at Appendix 1 to the Report.
- 2.2 The Comhairle approved the draft BSL Plan 2024-2030 on 29 November 2023 to go out to consultation with known BSL users and their representatives via the Comhairle's 'Have Your Say' consultation pages, and through the Community Councils, the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partners (OHCPP) and the Western Isles Sensory Centre.
- 2.3 As no feedback was received by the initial closing date, the consultation period was extended to 14 January 2024 and the amended closing date circulated to stakeholders.
- 2.4 Once approved, the BSL Action Plan 2024-2030 will be input to Interplan to enable services to implement and monitor the actions through their business plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle**
 - (a) **Note the BSL Progress Report 2018-2024 at Appendix 1 to the Report;**
 - (b) **Note the requirements of the BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 for public bodies in Scotland to publish BSL plans every six years, the second of which is to be published by April 2024; and**
 - (c) **Approve the Draft BSL Plan 2024-2030 at Appendix 2 to the Report.**

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Appendices: 1: BSL Progress Report 2018-2024
2: BSL Plan 2024-2030

Background Papers: BSL (Scotland) Act 2015
BSL National Plan 2023-2029

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	There are no financial implications in terms of this report. However, the development and implementation of the BSL Plan 2024-2030 does require financial resources to support the costs of preparing the plan and translating both the draft and final plan into BSL.
Legal	The British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years showing how they will promote and support BSL.
Staffing	There are no staffing implications associated with this Report.
Assets and Property	There are no asset and property implications associated with this Report.
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	There are no risk implications associated with this Report.
Equalities	There are no identified equality issues within this Report.
Corporate Strategy	It is the Comhairle's Strategic Priority to support caring and resilient communities and quality of life. Strategic Outcomes in the Corporate Strategy 2024-2027 include reducing inequality and poverty and promoting social mobility.
Environmental Impact	There are no identified environmental impacts within this Report.
Consultation	Consultation via the Comhairle' online consultation website, with Community Councils, OHCPP, and BSL users and their representatives via the Western Isles Sensory Centre were undertaken.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires public bodies in Scotland to publish plans every six years, showing how they will promote and support BSL. The first plans were to be published by October 2018 and a sum of £11,000 was allocated to each local authority to support the costs of preparing the plans and translating both the draft and final plan into BSL. The new BSL Local Plan 2024-2030 is to be published by April 2024. Plans are to be framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan and should set out the actions public bodies will take over the period of the Plan.
- 5.2 The BSL National Plan 2023-2029 was published on 6 November 2023. The final plan is framed around nine priority areas with a mix of short-, mid- and long-term goals.
- 5.3 The priority areas include BSL Data; Access to Employment; Children, Young People and their Families; BSL Accessibility; Celebrating BSL Culture; Health and Wellbeing; Transport; Access to Justice; Democratic Participation.
- 5.4 Outcomes set in the BSL National Plan for Transport and Access to Justice are at such a level that they are to be undertaken and implemented by national government. Relevant Comhairle services may want to consider monitoring progress and potential measures to be taken.
- 5.5 Outstanding actions from the BSL Action Plan 2018-2024 will be carried forward to the approved BSL Action Plan 2024 – 2030.
- 5.6 As part of the development process the Comhairle involved BSL users and those who represent them; ensured that the consultation on the draft plan is accessible to D/deaf and Deafblind BSL users; and that the draft plan was published in BSL as well as in English. The 2011 Census reports 36 individuals using British Sign Language at home across the Western Isles. As per Scottish Government website, the

2022 Census data in respect of individuals' main languages will be made available mid-2024 at the earliest.

DETAIL

- 6.1 Certain outcomes in the new BSL Local Plan 2024-2030 are built on progress made since publishing the first BSL Local Plan 2018-2024. Any areas currently in progress have been carried forward into the new plan for 2024 – 2030.
- 6.2 Outcomes of the final draft plan have been framed around the Scottish Government BSL Plan 2023-2029 and include some ongoing actions from the BSL Plan 2018-2024. Directors have liaised with the relevant officers across their services, and their comments have been taken into consideration before arranging translation of the draft plan and beginning the consultation process locally.
- 6.3 Contact was established with the Western Isles Sensory Centre to reach local deaf clubs and BSL users. Local Community Councils were also involved in the consultation process. The draft plan was published on the consultation pages on the Comhairle website, in English and BSL, and made available to known BSL users and their representatives. In preparation for the consultation, the printed document was translated into BSL by a translation service.
- 6.4 No feedback was provided. Therefore, the consultation period was extended and another reminder sent out to give interested parties the opportunity to submit feedback if desired. Any future comments will be evaluated and taken into consideration for updating the BSL Plan 2024-2030.
- 6.5 To support performance monitoring, the "Our Actions - By 2030" will be input to Interplan to enable services to take these forward. Although not all services have BSL actions to specifically report on, we all have a requirement to raise awareness of BSL throughout the Comhairle.
- 6.6 The final draft is now being presented to the Comhairle for approval. Thereafter, the Comhairle's BSL Plan 2024-2030 will be published on or before 30 April 2024.
- 6.7 Financial resources to support the costs of preparing the plan and translating both the draft and final draft plan into BSL have been identified.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Following Comhairle agreement on 29 November 2023 to consult on its draft BSL Plan 2024-2030, consultation was undertaken with BSL users and those who represent them, Community Councils, the OHCPP, the Western Isles Sensory Centre and the general public.
- 7.2 It is recommended that the Comhairle approve the draft BSL Plan 2024–2030 appended to the Report. The Plan is framed around six of the priority areas identified in the BSL National Plan 2023-2029 and includes the outstanding actions from the BSL Plan 2018-2024.
- 7.3 The BSL (Scotland) Act 2015 requires the Comhairle to publish their BSL Plan 2024-2030 on or before 30 April 2024.