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**Full assessment of a Parental Request for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE)  
in Glasgow City Council**

**17 June 2022**

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### Section 1

#### Background

1. The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 places a duty on education authorities to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education (GME) and Gaelic Learner Education (GLE) and establish a process by which parents can request Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) from their education authority.
2. Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) takes the form of immersion i.e. children experience all their learning in the early years of primary school (P1 to P3) through the Gaelic language. Thereafter, immersion continues but in P4 to P7 English is introduced, while Gaelic remains the predominant language of the classroom.
3. At present Glasgow City Council (GCC) has comprehensive and extensive provision in GMPE and has consistently developed this provision over several years.
4. Statutory guidance issued by Bòrd Na Gàidhlig came into force on 1 February 2017, Part 1 of which sets out the actions education authorities must take to assess demand on receipt of a request for GMPE.
5. Under the legislation (which is further explained in the statutory guidance) parents of children under school age and who have not yet started primary school have the right to request an assessment of the need for GMPE from the education authority in which the family resides. Any request must be accompanied by evidence of demand for GMPE from parents of other children, resident in the same education authority who will begin primary school in the same year as the specified child. The initial assessment of demand must be completed within 6 weeks of receipt of the request and a full assessment within 10 weeks following the outcome decision of the initial assessment. The local authority must produce a report on the exercise and communicate the findings of their report appropriately.
6. When an education authority receives a parental request made under the 2016 Act, it must designate the geographical area within which it will undertake the assessment of need for GMPE referred to as a 'GMPE assessment area'.
7. The threshold for an obligatory full assessment under the 2016 Act is that the education authority is satisfied that there is demand in the identified GMPE assessment area from the parents of at least five children – including the specified child - who are all resident in the identified assessment area and who are all in the same year group as the specified child.

### Section 2

#### Initial assessment

8. On 25<sup>th</sup> February 2022 Glasgow City Council Education Services received a request from a parent resident in Glasgow seeking an assessment of the demand for GMPE in Glasgow for her child, known as the lead child, who is due to start primary school in August 2022. Included as part of the request were the names of a further four children whose parents had also expressed a desire for GMPE for their children for August 2022.

GCC further determined that the area identified for the initial assessment was to be the entire Council area. We arrived at this decision given that the initial request came from parents of five children living in two of the existing four catchment areas for primary GME (three from the existing north west catchment and two from the existing south east

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catchment), allied to the fact that we already have information on the level of demand across all four existing GMPE catchment areas of the city.

9. Where any education authority determines that there is a potential need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area, it has two possible options, it can:

- carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE in the GMPE assessment area; or
- without carrying out a full assessment, exercise its discretion to take such steps as are necessary to secure the provision of such GMPE as it considers appropriate in the GMPE assessment area.

10. Following an initial assessment of demand, Education Services finally decided on 8<sup>th</sup> April, to carry out a full assessment of the need for GMPE. The statutory guidance states that: *‘when carrying out a full assessment an education authority must have regard to a list of mandatory matters and must decide to secure provision in the GMPE assessment area unless it would be unreasonable to do so’.*

11. The reason for moving to a full assessment is based on the fact that there are five or more children in the same year group looking to enrol in GMPE for August 2022, which led to the determination that there is a potential need for GMPE in the assessment area. Furthermore, over the last two sessions, the number of families initially registering for enrolment for a place in primary GMPE, has exceeded the number of places available across the now four GMPE primary establishments. However, the number of children being registered for enrolment in GMPE remains at a broadly similar level at the same point as last year.

12. Education Services wrote to all parents whose name were provided as part of the initial request to indicate that they were carrying out a full assessment. They also posted the outcome of the initial assessment on the Council website as per the statutory guidance.

### Section 3

#### **Full assessment – consideration of mandatory factors.**

##### **13. Mandatory factors considered included:**

- Views provided by statutory consultees
- Initial assessment information in relation to demand
- Existing provision
- Existing provision in neighbouring authorities and the availability of access
- Access to GMPE in Glasgow from children in other local authorities
- Accommodation
- Teachers
- Costs
- The Glasgow City Council Gaelic Language Plan

##### **14. Views provided by statutory consultees**

The full response received from each of the statutory consultees is included in the appendices at the end of the report.

In summary, each of the responses noted the following main points:

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### **Bòrd Na Gàidhlig**

- Noted the continued success of GMPE and GM secondary and early years provision within the City of Glasgow. Note the increase in the number of young people educated through the medium of Gaelic. Congratulate the authority on their success.
- Agreed that the local authority should deliver GMPE for all children who request it for August 2022
- Sought clarification on the claim that all families who applied for GMPE places in August 2021 did in fact secure it
- That existing GMPE provision is currently insufficient in terms of places available in relation to demand
- State that costs should present no barrier to extending provision
- State that acquiring teaching staff is a challenge nationally
- Suggest that the authority explore interim arrangements with neighbouring authorities
- Recommend the authority undertake a strategic review of GME to extend and improve provision and construct a GME Staffing and Recruitment Strategy for GME.

### **Comann Nam Pàrant**

- Noted that over the last two sessions the number of families seeking to enrol in GMPE has exceeded the places available
- Sought clarification that all families who wanted to enrol in August 2021 did in fact secure a place
- Expressed the view that families currently enrolled in early years provision had the expectation that their journey would continue into GMPE in P1
- Noted that not all families are prepared to travel out with their home authority to access GMPE
- Suggested that a failure by the authority to adopt an effective strategic plan to meet the increased demand has resulted in families being refused entry which is unacceptable
- Stated that costs should not be a barrier to expansion
- Acknowledged that teacher supply is challenging
- Recommend that the council should embrace the increased demand for GMPE rather than attempt to stifle it by introducing a cap on numbers.

### ***Education Scotland***

- Agreed that there is sufficient demand for establishing GMPE for August 2022
- Recognise that GME provision is successful within the council. Noted that existing provisions are not meeting demand for places
- That the council should plan to ensure that future provisions provide sufficient space to enable growth
- Suggest that the council should explore the option of further unit provisions while permanent building work is undertaken
- Recommend the council continues with its long-term strategic planning for GME ensuring that parental voices are heard
- Recommends that the council accesses Scottish Government funding for expansion
- Suggests that the authority should complete an Equality and Human Rights assessment.

The National Parent Forum for Scotland chose not to respond.

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### 15. Initial assessment information

Our initial assessment information highlights that while at the time of conclusion of the initial assessment on 08 April 2022, numbers for August 2022 entry across the GMPE estate stood at 178 for the 140 places. The position has changed to one whereas of 16 June 2022 there are now only 157 children currently looking for a place. Several children in the intervening period have been able to secure places at independent schools, GMPE in other adjacent authorities or made a decision to enrol at their local school. This pattern mirrors that of 2021. While the position back in August 2021 meant that all children who sought entry to Berkley Street were able to be accommodated, this was not the case at Glendale PS where there remains a waiting list of nine children. We acknowledge that this is counter to the factual position that was outlined earlier in the letters to statutory consultees and we trust that this now clarifies the record and rectifies our initial error.

It is worthy of note that with less than 20% of children coming into GMPE from households where Gaelic is spoken as a first language, it is not possible to predict future numbers with any degree of accuracy.

### 16. Existing provision

Glasgow currently benefits from extensive GME provision which constitutes the largest provision of any other authority out with the Western Isles and Highland. Current provision includes early years provision across five sites, three council and two funded providers - Rowena in the north west, Berkley Street in the north west, Lyoncross in Pollok in the south, with funded providers operating at Seudan Beaga and Oganon both in the south of the city; current primary school provision exists across three sites – Bunsgoil Glasgow Gaelic (Berkley Street), Bunsgoil Ghàidhlig Ghleann Dail (Glendale Gaelic), Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Bhaile a' Ghobhainn (Govan Gaelic) PSs and a secondary provision at Sgoil Ghàidhlig Ghlaschu, Glasgow Gaelic Secondary School (Ard sgoil - Berkley Street Campus). Numbers currently enrolled are significant, and provision has grown over the past few years. As at September census 2021, pupil numbers across the primary estate totalled 828 and 411 across the secondary provision. It is worth noting that Glasgow has more primary pupils enrolled in GMPE than the Western Isles and at 1.9% of the population has the largest proportion of the population enrolled behind Highland, Western Isles and Argyll and Bute Councils. At secondary stages Glasgow has more pupils enrolled than any other council except Highland. At 1.4% of the population, again, Glasgow has a higher proportion enrolled than any other council except Western Isles, Highland and Argyll and Bute.

Plans are underway to extend provision by opening a unit at the new North Kelvininside PS campus in August 2022, which will transfer into the new north east provision in the current St James PS building from August 2024. Further planning is underway to find a new site for another primary provision in the north west of the city which will support the plans to decant the current primary and early years provision from Berkley Street, to create the much-needed additional space to expand the number of places available across the GME estate. We hope to have the new provision open by August 2027. This will allow us to increase the number of places at secondary stages and therefore P1 intake numbers across the GME estate from the current 140 each year to a total intake of 180.

### 17. Neighbouring authority provision

Some children living in Glasgow benefit from the GMPE provision at Mount Cameron PS in South Lanarkshire. Other authorities nearby that offer GMPE include Inverclyde Council at Whinhill Primary School in Greenock, East Dunbartonshire Council at Meadowburn PS in

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Bishopbriggs and North Lanarkshire Council at Condorrat PS in Cumbernauld. Further additional new provision will open in East Renfrewshire at a location yet to be confirmed and also in Renfrewshire Council at West PS, both from August 2023. It would be our hope that any children failing to secure a place in Glasgow would be able to successfully access provision in those neighbouring authorities. While recognising that not all families will wish to travel out with Glasgow, we also recognise that depending on where children live in the city, this may well mean a shorter daily commute than should they be required to travel across the city.

### **18. Access to GME in Glasgow for children residing in other authorities**

While Glasgow has historically been able to accommodate requests for GME from children living in adjacent authorities, this has not been possible over the last two sessions as demand from within Glasgow has increased. Across session 2020/21 there were 30 children enrolled across the GMPE estate who resided in other council areas. It is not anticipated, with the current levels of demand, that Glasgow would be able to return to a position where it could accommodate requests from out with Glasgow in the near future.

### **19. Accommodation**

While Glendale Gaelic school exists as part of a campus arrangement, there is no option to increase current capacity on that site. There are options however to increase places in the future within Govan Gaelic PS, with the potential also to grow numbers at the future north east provision in St James PS. All of this is predicated on securing a new site for a north west primary to allow us to decant the nursery and secondary provision from the Berkley Street building and increase the yearly intake beyond the current 140 places. The present cap was approved by the City Administration Committee in October 2021 and has risen steadily over the years from a cap of 90 as recently as 2020.

### **20. Teachers**

Both Bòrd Na Gàidhlig and Comann Nam Pàrant acknowledge in their responses that recruitment of teaching staff continues to present challenges nationally and we would concur that this continues to be our experience here in the city of Glasgow. It therefore presents in our view a significant barrier to extending our current provision.

Across the GMPE estate we currently have 40 primary teachers and 16 support for learning workers. Within the secondary provision we have 33 teachers and three support for learning workers.

Within the primary sector provision, we currently have two full time teacher vacancies with a further 1.4FTE vacancy on a temporary basis. Within the secondary provision there are currently two unallocated vacancies for teaching staff.

The Glasgow City Council staff survey results recently highlight that in 2022 of the 266 responses, 18% understood spoken Gaelic (19% in 2021); 16% spoke Gaelic (17% in 2021); 18% could read Gaelic (18% in 2021); 14% could write Gaelic (16% in 2021) and 25% were learning Gaelic (19% in 2021).

### **21. Costs**

The costs of providing a new primary school are in region of £15 - 20 million, depending on the site. We find it difficult to accept that in the current cost of living crisis and inflationary period we are all experiencing daily, that costs should be dismissed as not being a barrier to extending provision. Education Services' budget is unlikely to increase over the

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next four years which will represent a real term cut. We therefore believe that cost is a barrier but not perhaps one that is insurmountable should additional funding be provided by our colleagues in Scottish Government.

Glasgow's annual Gaelic Specific Grant is at this stage completely committed with the largest proportions directed towards transport and staffing and smaller amounts supporting family learning and career long professional learning. While the Gaelic Specific Grant is subject to a bid every year from each local authority, as more local authorities look to provide GMPE, we anticipate that our allocation will decrease.

### **22. Glasgow City Council Gaelic Language Plan**

All public authorities in Scotland are required to have a Gaelic Language Plan under Section 3 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. Glasgow's plan was approved in 2018 and will be renewed by 2023. The new draft plan is currently out for consultation.

Glasgow's Plan sets out the Council's commitment to promote the Gaelic language in line with the National Gaelic Language Plan. The National Plan 2018-2023 sets out three priorities:

- Increasing the use of Gaelic
- Increasing the learning of Gaelic
- Promoting a positive image of Gaelic

In GCCs 2018-22 Plan the Council identified and committed to the following actions for education:

- Adhere to the Education Scotland Act 2016 and to the statutory guidance on Gaelic Education – work on going
- Establish a third Gaelic Medium Primary School - opened Govan Gaelic Primary
- Increase early learning and childcare provision within the GME sector - currently using specific grant to staff provision to allow for 1140 hours
- Work with Bòrd Na Gàidhlig to develop 0-3 provision within the city – progress here has been impacted by Covid 19
- Increase personalisation and choice post broad general education for GME students – work already ongoing with SQA
- Develop a more robust learning pathway for all students and staff in GME and GLE – work which is on going

### **Section 4 – Conclusion**

While we accept that current demand for GME outstrips our ability to provide places, we do believe that as a result of the challenges we currently face in both lack of space in the secondary provision and in the recruitment and retention of staff, particularly Gaelic speakers into promoted posts, that it is unreasonable at this juncture to provide any additional provision beyond that which we have already committed to in our long-term planning.

We have further concerns that should our GME provision extend beyond that which we have already planned to provide, this may well carry a risk of provision which is GME in name only, further exacerbating our challenges around staffing. Currently much of young people's secondary experience is not actually provided through Gaelic language, because of a lack of fluent Gaelic speakers as teaching staff and where young people's broad general education BGE experience is compromised as a result. Our plan would be to strengthen the quality of what we already have planned to provide, by recruiting high quality

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teaching staff who are fluent Gaelic speakers to support the delivery of a rich and fully immersive learning experience across the entire curriculum before we extend the offer further beyond our existing strategic plan. We believe that children who are unable to secure provision GMPE within Glasgow could access provision in neighbouring authorities as an interim arrangement, until the point at which Glasgow is in the position to further increase the number of places available.

In recent months we have advertised for principal teacher positions and been in some instances unable to appoint. We were in the recent past unable to recruit an acting headteacher to a maternity cover post and we have had a very poor response from teachers to an offer of leadership development training fully funded by us as an authority.

We therefore believe that it is unreasonable for us to extend provision further at this juncture. We reject wholeheartedly the view that we are stifling demand for GMPE by the introduction of a cap on numbers. In fact, the evidence runs to counter to this claim in that demand has continued to rise despite the cap being place for several years. The rationale for having a cap, similar to many other schools across the city, is to carefully manage the secondary school numbers and ensure that we can actually guarantee provision and progression for all young people currently enrolled or enrolling through to S6, should that be their intention and avoid creating an expectation that we may well not be able to deliver. We believe this to be not only prudent but also importantly, both responsible and fair.

We note that Bòrd Na Gàidhlig mention on their website that '*Glasgow continues to deliver steady growth with its largest ever intake of P1 pupils into GMPE*'. It would be our view that we may well put this steady growth at risk by diluting the quality of what is delivered as part of the GMPE experience and recognise that this could well happen should we move beyond what has already been planned for, in terms of existing capacity and staffing across the GME estate.

We would maintain that meeting the demand of our current GMPE provision should remain our priority as it continues to present us with significant challenges both from a statutory responsibility and from our key position of maintaining high quality service delivery.

### **Section 5 – Education Services Recommendation**

That GCC Education Services do not progress with alternative plans at this point in time, to extend the range of GME provision beyond that which they have already planned for, as we consider it unreasonable to do so, because of staffing challenges combined with lack of space in the secondary GME estate. We believe these to be fundamental obstacles to securing further provision. We will however continue to monitor the situation and strategically plan for extending provision in light of a future sustained increase in demand. We believe we have taken a thorough and reasoned approach to detailing the balance arrived at in this full assessment. We further believe that we have and continue to comply very well with our statutory duty to secure GMPE provision across the city of Glasgow.

### **Section 6 – Next Steps**

We will proceed with our existing GME strategic working group and will look to secure additional funding to build our new GME primary in the north west of the city. This will support our plans to decant the exiting primary school and nursery from the Berkley Street building thereby allowing us to increase the intake from the existing 140 places each year to a sustainable increased intake of 180 places. We will ensure that the group continues to review the city wide GME provision and will endeavour to work with other West Partnership (WP) authorities to secure additional secondary provision for GME across the WP areas.

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- Continue with plans to open a unit for GME in NKPS and to grow the new St James PS, our next GME provision in the north east of the city
- Continue to progress plans for a new primary school in the north west of the city
- Continue with our longer-term strategic plan of decanting the Berkley Street building to create additional spaces for the raising of secondary student intake numbers
- Continue to support leadership development training across all staff in all our GME provisions
- Continue to do all that we can to attract and retain GME teachers
- Continue to support the ongoing work of the GME strategic working group.

### Appendices

1. Statutory Response – Bòrd Na Gàidhlig
2. Statutory Response – Comann Nam Pàrant
3. Statutory Response – Education Scotland

#### Appendix 1



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BnG-Glaschu.pdf

#### Appendix 2



Comann nam Pàrant  
Response to Full Asse

#### Appendix 3



Glasgow City Council  
- Report - Education ('