

# MINUTES

# A&B - Public

**Education and Families Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Monday 2 October 2017 at 10:00am**

**Present:**

Councillors:

P Campbell	C Hughson
E Macdonald	R McGregor
D Sandison	C Smith
G Smith	T Smith
R Thomson	B Wishart

Religious Representatives:

M Tregonning

**Apologies:**

J Fraser	T Macintyre
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**In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services  
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement  
M Nicolson, Executive Manager – Children and Families  
S Thompson, Executive Manager - Schools  
R Calder, Quality Improvement Officer  
J Edwards, Quality Improvement Officer  
K Johnston, Solicitor  
B Kerr, Communications Officer  
M Thomson, Management Accountant  
J Sutherland, Executive Manager – Children’s Resources  
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also:

C Haddon, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP)  
S Thomson, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP)

**Chairperson**

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

**Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair welcomed Mr Haddon and Mr Thomason, MSYPs, to the meeting, and advised that a report would be presented to the Council proposing that they are formally approved as observers at meetings of the Committee in future. Due to their age, they were unable to participate as full voting members, but their contribution to the debate was welcomed.

**Declarations of Interest**

None

**Minutes**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 August 2017 on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Ms Wishart.

23/17     **External Audit Reports: Education Scotland**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-21-17-F) which presented two recent reports from HM Inspectors of Education (HMIE) on North Roe and Scalloway Primary Schools.

The Director of Children's Services explained that all inspection reports were presented to the Committee, and that this had been the first opportunity to present these two reports since the inspections had been carried out in May. The Quality Improvement Officers working with the schools were present at the meeting to answer questions. Strengths and areas for improvement had been identified for both schools. An Action Plan had been produced for North Roe Primary School to deal with the proposed actions that had arisen from the inspection. The areas for development identified by inspectors in respect of Scalloway Primary School would be taken forward within the school's normal improvement processes. Neither school would be receiving a return visit, as HMIE was satisfied with the capacity of the schools to continue to improve.

The Director of Children's Services then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- Self-evaluation was something that Education Scotland looked at closely to help determine how schools would take things forward. In both these cases, more work could be done to involve parents, pupils and staff in evaluating their schools, and consider areas they wished to develop. Children's Services had been developing the Quality Improvement Framework, and officers would be discussing how to move forward with head teachers and parent councils.
- The full report in respect of Scalloway Primary School nursery was available on the Education Scotland website. However the reference to increasing the pace of change in the nursery related to collaborative planning and learning, and continuing progression in this area.
- The Quality Improvement Officer would assist and support North Roe Primary School in progressing the Action Plan that had been developed. Some of the very small schools did not have the staff capacity to take this forward at the same pace as larger schools, so the Quality Improvement Officers would prioritise extra help and support for this.
- Quality Improvement Officers visited all schools each term, and a framework setting out what additional support was required to take forward areas of development for each of them was already in place. The improvement plans schools created were also considered by the Quality Improvement Officers, and one of their visits to the school would focus exclusively on this area.

Members commented that they were pleased to see the reports on both schools, and noted that they should be considered in the context of the significant resource challenges that schools faced. It was also commented that there had been a period of significant change at Scalloway Primary School.

The Chair added that it was important to work together and to support the quality improvement team to secure improvements, but it was also important to take cognisance of the strengths that had been highlighted.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families discussed the contents of the report, and NOTED the Education Scotland reports on:

- North Roe Primary School
- Scalloway Primary School

**24/17 Education Governance – Fair Funding Consultation**

The Committee considered a report by the Director – Children’s Services (CS-21-17-F) regarding the draft consultation response on the Fair Funding for Schools consultation.

The Executive Manager – Schools summarised the main terms of the report, advising that delegated authority was being sought to finalise the consultation response for submission by 13 October. There were a number of significant concerns regarding the proposals, and it was crucial that a robust response was submitted. The draft response particularly emphasised the unique circumstances of island and rural areas and the requirement for ‘island proofing’, particularly in respect of funding and funding methodology. A number of other issues and concerns had been highlighted, including concerns relating to the presumption that all local authorities would devolve school management and that schools would have access to business support managers. The consultation did not take account of the wider children’s services landscape, nor the lack of opportunity to achieve economies of scale locally. The Committee was invited to provide any additional comments to be incorporated into the response.

The Chair advised that as a result of constructive dialogue between local government and the Scottish Government, there had been an important development regarding regionalisation and regional collaboratives at the recent COSLA Leaders meeting. A key factor in achieving the aims set out by the Scottish Government for education reform would see each local authority being part of one of six Improvement Collaboratives on a regional basis, in partnership with Education Scotland. These Improvement Collaboratives would be accountable to the collaborating local authorities, and would also report to Education Scotland. The Improvement Collaboratives would enhance and improve professional learning for teachers and other professionals; would identify, share and promote good practice across partners; and enhance day-to-day support for education professionals in the delivery of education. A list of key functions had been agreed, and improvement plans would be in place by January 2018. The Northern Alliance had already started to take these steps. He went on to say that it was crucial that there continued to be local democratic accountability, and it was vital that this was recognised by the Scottish Government in respect of funding, as well as improvement.

In response to a question, he advised that he was pleased at the Scottish Government’s move to a collaborative approach from a regional decision-making approach, as this mirrored closely the approach being led by the Northern Alliance. However he still had concerns regarding funding, and getting the unique circumstances of the islands recognised. The pupil-equity funded type of model which the Scottish Government had favoured recently did not suit Shetland’s circumstances, and this would be made clear. There would be difficulties locally in delivering the school management model and a more pragmatic position was required, although it was preferable to devolved school management. Distribution of funding from the centre

would achieve economies of scale and better outcomes than fragmented models. It would be challenging for head teachers locally to take on business management roles, and almost impossible for those who also had teaching roles, so this would be emphasised to the Scottish Government. A type of devolved school management model which took account of local circumstances would be best for staff, and the Deputy First Minister would have to be convinced that such a scheme could be put in place in Shetland. It was hoped to meet the Deputy First Minister in Edinburgh at the end of the month, and he had been invited to visit Shetland.

The Chair went on to say that the Director of Development Services had been in touch with him to make the point that it was also important to include transport in relation to the discussions around island proofing. There was a need to ensure that the local transport system suited local circumstances and was affordable, and it was vital that it was not looked at in isolation due to its wider impact across all Council services. So this point would also be raised in the response.

It was commented that there was a general acceptance that the cost of providing services in island areas was 30-40% higher than other areas. As well as increasing the cost of education provision, the increased cost of living meant that levels of poverty were under-represented. Therefore it had to be emphasised that this was one of the reasons that funding methodology relating to free school meals did not work locally as, in effect, the income threshold for free school meals locally should sit at a figure nearer £20,000 rather than £15,500.

The Executive Manager – Schools advised that reference had been included in the draft response to the work carried out by the Scottish Parliament regarding the cost of living in rural areas, and this could be elaborated on in the response.

It was questioned if the reference to Regional Improvement Collaboratives on the first page was still accurate, given the recent COSLA announcement, and the Chair confirmed that it was. As Regional Improvement Collaboratives would not be established as entities in their own right, they could not have funds allocated to them, although they did have decision-making powers at local authority level.

It was questioned if there had been collaboration with Orkney and the Western Isles regarding their proposed responses, given the higher than average costs of living and the challenges relating to education provision in island areas.

The Director of Children's Services advised that the fact island authorities had similar issues was something that was discussed at Northern Alliance meetings. The island areas had a sub-group within the Northern Alliance and information was shared, particularly around funding. There was much more awareness about each other's positions than there had been a few years ago. The Northern Alliance was also considering producing a response in recognition of the very specific factors in relation to the islands.

On the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr McGregor, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

The Chair advised that a copy of the response would be circulated before its final submission.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee:

- NOTED the draft consultation response on the Fair Funding for Schools consultation
- PROVIDED additional comments to be incorporated into the draft response
- AGREED that delegated authority be given to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Education and Families Committee to finalise the consultation response

25/17

### **Annual Inspection of Children's Residential Services**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-15-17-F) which summarised the findings of the annual inspection of children's residential services which took place in August 2016.

The Executive Manager – Children's Resources summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there were no improvements or actions required. The report highlighted the strengths of the service and made two recommendations, both of which had been addressed.

Responding to a queries, he advised that staff and leadership had not been assessed as a lower intensity type of inspection took place where services had consistently been performing well. Undertaking work placements was an area that was being developed further, and a couple of young people were currently undertaking work placements. There were ten spaces available for residential staff who wished to undertake the Level 9 qualification in association with Robert Gordon University. Some staff had been granted advance entry, so four were currently undertaking the qualification. More were expected to join in January next year.

The Chair advised that he was pleased to hear of the good work that had been carried out, and he went on to highlight the Council's responsibility regarding corporate parenting. He advised that the Council had recently appointed three members to the Corporate Parenting Board, and it was hoped to engage directly with young people at its first meeting.

Members commented that it was a positive report that recognised the efforts and commitment of staff.

### **Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee NOTED the inspection of residential services and the completion of the associated action plan.

The meeting concluded at 10.45am.

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Chair