

MINUTES

B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 5 March 2018 at 10:00am

Present:

Councillors:

P Campbell	J Fraser
R McGregor	D Sandison
G Smith	T Smith
R Thomson	

Religious Representatives:

H Rankine	M Tregonning
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Apologies:

C Hughson	E Macdonald
T Macintyre	C Smith
B Wishart	

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
J Belford, Executive Manager – Finance
M Nicolson, Executive Manager – Children and Families/Chief Social Work Officer
J Sutherland, Executive Manager – Children’s Resources
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
L Gray, Senior Assistant Accountant
K Johnston, Solicitor
J Macleod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2018 on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr Tregonning.

Children's Services Performance Report – 9 Month/3rd Quarter 2017/18

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-08-18-F) summarising the activity and performance of the Children's Services Directorate for the third quarter of 2017/18.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular that the new Anderson High School project was now complete and there was a one-year snagging period for the contractor to rectify any issues. The Northern Alliance had now submitted its Improvement Plan and Workforce Development Plan to the Scottish Government, and these would also be presented to the Committee. The Council had also submitted its responses in respect of a number of proposed legislative reforms, and a new draft parental involvement strategy had been prepared. With regard to the expansion of early learning and childcare, a strategic delivery plan had been submitted, and the revised financial plan had now been completed. It was understood that further information would be available around the three-year settlement for capital funding later in the spring.

She went on to speak about the impact that difficulties in recruiting to certain specialist posts were having in Children's Services, and advised that these difficulties had been highlighted in the Risk Register. Children's Services was looking at what could be done to attract people to work in the Service, and was working alongside Human Resources regarding workforce development.

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

- The Quarter 3 primary school attendance rates were slightly below target. These figures were analysed on a regular basis, and could be affected by long-term conditions affecting some pupils, as well as by shorter-term illnesses. It was recognised that there were other issues relating to emotional wellbeing that affected attendance at school, and these would be picked up in the strategy going forward. A new indicator would be replacing the existing overall attendance figures in the next financial year, and this would more accurately reflect the number of pupils with low attendance rates.
- The increase in overtime for janitors at the Anderson High School had related to the move to the new school, and it was not anticipated that it would be at this level again.
- The target for completing Looked After Children reviews within required timescales had not been met due to staff shortages. A report would be brought forward to a future meeting regarding issues that were arising as a result of staff shortages, and what was being done to mitigate the effects.
- Measures taken to close the attainment gap had to be reported back at a national level. Schools in receipt of equity funding had to record and monitor their use of the funding, and a report would be presented to the Committee regarding what had been done in this particular area. Work had also been taking place through the Northern Alliance on early literacy. Some analysis of this work had now been carried out and could be shared with Members. Work relating to early numeracy was now commencing.

- The initial information that the Council had been asked to supply in respect of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare had been extensive, and staff had spent a significant amount of time ensuring that all the detail had been included. However the Scottish Government had asked local authorities to submit a revised financial template. It was understood that a lot of local authorities had submitted aspirational items that did not meet the criteria. The Council's return had been clear about the capacity of buildings, and the revised financial template submitted had not been terribly different to the original. A report would be brought to a future meeting regarding the financial requirements for this expansion to Early Learning and Childcare once the package had been announced, and it was likely that some reprofiling would have to take place locally.

The Committee noted that there were costs attached to Islesburgh Community Centre that were incurred by other departments of the Council, but it had been agreed that recharges would not be carried out in this respect. This was something that should be borne in mind by Members when considering budgets.

It was commented that it was interesting that although the number of complaints that were upheld was low, most of those upheld/partially upheld related to the behaviour and attitude of staff. It was suggested that this may relate to the way communication and engagement took place with parents and stakeholders, and that this may be a learning point for the future.

The Chair commented that there were a number of important points that had been raised. Staff recruitment was an area that would require to be looked at across Children's Services as it was impacting on service delivery, and it was important to find ways to continue to delivery priority services within the existing staffing complement. There was a need for a further report to look at recruitment across Children's Services which also took into consideration whether pay scales were appropriate and people's reasons for leaving their posts.

He went on to say that it would be interesting to see the outcome of the work that was taking place to close the attainment gap in all schools, and whether or not the funding some schools had received from the Scottish Government had made any difference. The costs relating to the expansion of early learning and childcare across Scotland were projected to be significantly more than the Scottish Government had been anticipating. Hopefully the review that was ongoing would take account of individual submissions from local authorities, and a 'one size fits all' reduction would not be applied across the country.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee discussed the contents of the report, and made relevant comments on progress against priorities to inform further activity within the remainder of this year, and the planning process for next and future years.

08/18

Children's Services 2018-20 Directorate Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-18-18-F) which presented the draft Children's Services Directorate Plan for 2018-20.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the work that was taking place in the four main areas of development for

Children's Services. She went on to speak about the promotion and engagement in activities locally to celebrate the Year of Young People, and advised that she would bring a report to the Committee regarding the "Big Takeover" that was being planned to pull together activities for young people across Shetland.

She went on to speak about the Performance Indicators in the report, advising that some new indicators were being included and some were being changed slightly. Work was taking place to refine targets and provide more meaningful information in relation to performance in future.

Responding to questions, she advised that free access to Shetland Recreational Trust facilities and transport was one of the ways Children's Services contributed to reducing inequalities, and she would arrange to circulate information regarding the qualifying criteria for this. Children's Services were working closely with Capital Programmes on the business case in respect of the provision of residential child care, and it was hoped to present a report to the Committee in May.

Some discussion took place regarding literacy and numeracy targets. It was noted that there had been an improvement in literacy targets, but that numeracy levels were slightly below target. The Director of Children's Services advised that the Council had been involved in a project with the Northern Alliance on early literacy, and it had been recognised that numeracy was an area for development. Work was taking place to develop a similar type of project for numeracy, and the Council would be looking at the different strategies other local authorities use to improve their numeracy targets.

The Chair commented that he was anxious to ensure that not all resources were focused on the Northern Alliance when there may be specific needs that require to be addressed in Shetland, so it was important that the improvement plan developed by the Northern Alliance was flexible enough so that any specific issues relevant to Shetland could be addressed locally.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee reviewed, discussed, and endorsed the Directorate Plan, recognising that the Director of Children's Services will make any necessary adjustments to the plan to ensure it is fully aligned with the final version of the Corporate Plan approved by Shetland Islands Council.

09/18

Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2017/18 – Projected Outturn at Quarter 3

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Finance (F-017-F) which presented the management accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 3.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Quarter 3 figures illustrated that there was an overspend of £380,000 in revenue and an underspend of £747,000 in capital. An allocation of £1,166,000 had been made to cover cost pressures. Some from Council contingencies would be carried forward in full, and some payments had not been drawn down as quickly as anticipated so would also be carried forward to 2018/19.

The Chair commented that there had been an improvement in the position since Quarter 2, when revenue overspend had been predicted to be £454,000. He

thanked staff for their efforts in getting to this position, which was difficult given the unpredictable nature of some of the services that were provided.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee reviewed the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 3, and agreed the actions set out by the Director of Children's Services in paragraph 4.3 to mitigate the projected overspend.

10/18

External Audit Reports – Care Inspectorate

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources (CS-10-18-F) which presented Inspectorate Reports for Children's Residential Services, Short Breaks for Children, and Islesburgh Out of School Care.

The Executive Manager – Children's Resources summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there had been six recommendations in respect of the Short Breaks for Children service. Immediate improvements had been made following this inspection and feedback from the follow up visit - carried out last week - had been very positive. Children's Residential Services had grown significantly over the last 18 months, and an action plan had been submitted to address the three recommendations that had been made. Immediate action had been taken to address the two issues raised following the inspection of the Islesburgh Out of School care service.

It was requested that a report be brought forward to a future meeting regarding progress towards the actions in the action plan and the recent feedback from the Care Inspectorate in respect of Short Breaks for Children.

It was commented that it was important to note that the quality of care and support in each of the services inspected had been assessed as "Very Good", so the Council was continuing to provide a good quality service. The issues raised in respect of management and leadership could relate to the earlier discussion in the meeting regarding difficulties in recruiting to some posts.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee NOTED the content of the Care Inspectorate Reports for Children's Residential Services, Short Breaks for Children, and Islesburgh Out of School Care.

Mr G Smith moved that in order to avoid the disclosure of exempt information, the Committee resolve to exclude the public in terms of the relevant legislation during consideration of the following items of business. Mr Sandison seconded.

(The media left the meeting)

(Ms Rankine and Mr Tregonning left the meeting)

11/18

Hub Project

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources.

The Executive Manager – Children’s Resources summarised the main terms of the report, and responded to questions from the Committee.

After hearing further from the Chief Social Worker, the Chair, and the Director of Children’s Services, Mr Campbell moved that the recommendations in the report be approved, with the addition that a report should be presented to the Committee in May outlining various options regarding how young people will be supported in future.

Mr T Smith seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee approved the recommendations in the report and agreed that a report should be presented to the next meeting of the Committee outlining various options looking at how young people will be supported in future

The meeting concluded at 11.20am.

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Chair