

MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Tuesday 18 December 2018 at 2.00pm

Present:

Councillors:

S Coutts	C Hughson
E Macdonald	R McGregor
D Sandison	G Smith
T Smith	R Thomson
B Wishart	

Apologies:

P Campbell	J Fraser
T Macintyre	H Rankine
M Tregonning	

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
R Sinclair, Executive Manager – Capital Programme
J Sutherland, Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Social Work
N Watt, Executive Manager – Sport and Leisure
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
J McLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
M Thomson, Management Accountant
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 4 October 2018 on the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Thomson.

39/18 **Children's Services Directorate Performance Report - Six Month/Second Quarter 2018/19**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (CS-39-18-F) summarising the activity and performance of the Children’s Services Directorate for the second quarter of 2018/19.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular the work that was taking place to gather evidence that the targets in respect of the Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education were being met, and the successful developments taking place in Developing the Young Workforce. The Developing the Young Workforce Co-ordinator had done a good job so far in engaging with employers locally, and this would be expanded. A successful Careers Event had recently been held at the Anderson High School, and this had been well-attended by younger pupils as well as older ones. It had been noted that there was a downturn in those interested in foundation apprenticeships, and the Northern Alliance was keen to see a whole range of qualifications being taken up by young people – including foundation apprenticeships and Modern Apprentices. The Chief Executive of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework had recognised the need to promote these, and the Council had taken her up on her offer to visit Shetland in the new year. It was recognised that parents had a huge influence on young people's choices, so it was important that parents also had a full understanding of what was available.

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

- College participation by 16-19 year olds had dropped nationally, and Shetland had a larger proportion of school leavers who went straight into paid employment. More young people were now staying on for S5 and S6 at school, and this was something that was encouraged by the Scottish Government. The number of school leavers locally who did not go into a positive destination was low, and more early intervention work was being carried out to help these people move on.
- Schools did promote other avenues of education as an alternative to university education. Teachers had a vital role to play in promoting these alternatives, but it had been found that the influence of parents was as strong as that of teachers. It was recognised that there was a need to ensure that parents had a better level of understanding about the range of opportunities available both in further/higher education and in the workplace.
- Children's Services worked hard from nursery education onwards to promote the uptake of free school meals, and to ensure that information was available to parents as children moved through the various stages of their education. It was interesting to note that uptake of clothing grants had increased recently.
- The target in respect of the number of S3 pupils achieving numeracy levels had not been met, but it had been based on data that was older than the last set of information received from the Scottish Government. The Scottish Government was now taking more elements into account, and targets would be better aligned when next reported.

Referring to the uptake of free school meals, the Chair advised that there had recently been a Scottish Government announcement regarding additional pupil equity funding, but this continued to use the uptake of free school meals as a measure. He was content that the local authority was doing what it could to promote uptake, and suggested that there was also a role for other agencies to do so. In response to a query, he advised that free school meals were funded by the Scottish Government, but it was noted that this funding was not ring-fenced.

The Director of Children's Services added that the average cost of school meals varied across Shetland, and the cost per pupil to the Council was higher in some schools than others.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee discussed the contents of this 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.

40/18

Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2018/19 - Projected Outturn at Quarter 2

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-079-18-F) which monitored the financial performance of services within its remit to ensure that Members were aware of the forecast income and expenditure, and the impact this would have with regard to delivering the approved budget.

The Management Accountant summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the projected revenue outturn position was an overspend of £860,000, and the projected capital outturn position was an underspend of £945,000, with a slippage requirement of the full amount for 2019/20.

Responding to questions, the Director of Children's Services advised that the increased requirement for SRT facilities largely related to the use of the 60/40 facility at Clickimin. When initial arrangements had been made with SRT, it had not - at that point - received funding to build the 60/40 facility. Now that the facility was in place, the AHS was keen to make use of it, so the cost for using SRT facilities had increased.

She also confirmed that the use of agency staff was now decreasing as it had been possible to recruit to some posts. Some of the staff that had been used were relief staff, but others had to be brought in from outwith Shetland to cover posts.

It was noted that the budget for primary teachers was set quite far ahead of the new academic year and, at that point, teacher numbers required in each school were not definite - even one or two children moving to a different area could affect the staffing requirement. Therefore this budget was held in contingencies and moved across later in the year when it was known what was required.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee reviewed the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 2.

41/18

External Audit Report - Care Inspectorate on Happyhansel Primary School Nursery

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-41-18-F) providing information on the Care Inspectorate Report following the recent inspection of the Happyhansel Primary School Nursery.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there were no required actions and that the areas for development would be taken care of as the nursery moved into the new extension.

It was noted that an area for development had been identified in respect of the quality of the environment, but the report stated that this had not been assessed.

The Director of Children's Services explained that inspections included a number of detailed sub-groups under the various headings. So this had been identified as an area for development in the context of the wider indicators, rather than relating to the quality of the environment by itself.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair expressed his appreciation to staff for the good report received.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee NOTED the content of the report.

42/18

Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare - Phasing and Capital Programme Plan - Update 2018/19

The Committee considered a report by the Quality Improvement Officer – Early Learning and Childcare (CS-40-18-F) which provided an update on the Phasing and the Capital Programme Plan for the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that work was progressing to recruit staff and to make the necessary changes to premises to ensure that there was sufficient capacity to provide what was required by August 2020. The revised Phasing Plan demonstrated that there would be sufficient capacity to provide 1140 hours of provision to all entitled children in Shetland by October 2019. No specific date for the expansion of settings in the outer islands of Fair Isle, Fetlar and Foula had yet been identified, but dialogue with parents would be ongoing and these settings would come on board as required.

The Executive Manager – Capital Programme then outlined the various projects that would be taking place in the revised capital programme. He highlighted in particular the work required at Bells Brae and Sound Schools, and advised that it was hoped to have tenders out for the works in March, with a return date of mid-April. This should leave time to carry out the works over the summer holiday period. Similar works were required at Baltasound School and the timetable would be the same, but there was some potential for decant within the school there. He added that half the design work had now been carried out in respect of Lunnasting School.

It was pointed out that a lot of work required to be carried out all over Shetland in a short-period of time, and it was questioned if the resources would be available locally to carry out this work in the timescale that had been set out.

The Executive Manager – Capital Programme said that he believed that the resources were available to carry out the work, but it would be naïve to give an assurance regarding timescales when building works were involved. There had been informal discussions with tradespeople locally, and the indications were that they were keen to see the works coming out for tender.

It was questioned if consideration had been given to short-term investment plans – such as using nearby Council-owned buildings – until capital investment plans came to fruition.

The Director of Children's Services said that this had been done on occasion in the past, and it was something that could be looked at again if required.

The Chair pointed out that registration week for schools was in February, and the situation could not arise whereby parents registered their children and made commitments accordingly, only to be told that the building was not ready for their children when the time came for them to attend. The Council was doing its best to get tenders out, but thereafter it would be down to local industry to complete the works on time. It was important to note that the Scottish Government had not allocated additional funding in terms of the resources required by local authority capital project teams who would be carrying out the work. He requested that an update report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee considered and commented on the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare Phasing Plan and Capital Programme, and the work required to deliver the infrastructure requirements.

43/18

Update: Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-42-18-F) providing information on the progress of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that a grant of just over £1million had been awarded to the Northern Alliance to take forward the work. It continued to make sound progress in doing so across the various workstreams. She highlighted in particular that a lead was being identified to take forward the work of the Rural Poverty workstream, and advised that the local attainment adviser had reported back information at an event involving strategic leads. She went on to speak about the Regional Improvement Plan which each collaborative had had to produce. The Northern Alliance's plan was one of the most advanced and had been approved by Education Scotland, though they had pointed out that there was a lot to achieve in the plan in the timescales set out. The grant funding awarded would assist in progressing the work required, and a number of the strands had already had a lot of work carried out on them. Work would focus on pulling the high level priorities together in the new year, and a number of teachers locally were involved in this. The Northern Alliance would be looking at how to ensure it could continue to provide education going forward in a sustainable way, and another conference with just the island groups would be taking place soon to look at island-specific issues.

The Leader highlighted the challenges in delivering education in rural and island areas, and in continuing to ensure that the Scottish Government took account of the message from rural local authorities that sufficient resources required to be made available to deliver education in rural areas.

The Chair commented that it was an ambitious plan, but the Northern Alliance was currently leading the way. Working in collaboration gave the Council the benefit of

experience from other local authorities, and access to opportunities that it may not otherwise have access to. He welcomed the appointment of a Lead Officer and the grant funding, and said that he hoped that a single focus across the eight local authorities would influence the Scottish Government to take issues into account.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee:

- NOTED the progress of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2)
- NOTED a grant of up to £1,086,067 has been allocated to the Northern Alliance to enhance the Regional Improvement Collaborative's activities and capacity building

44/18

External Audit - Care Inspectorate Reports

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Executive Manager – Children's Social Work (CS-43-18-F) providing information on the findings of inspections carried out by the Care Inspectorate on the following services:

- Adoption
- Fostering
- Children's Residential Services (Grodiains)
- Islesburgh Out of School Care Service

The Deputy Executive Manager – Children's Social Work summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular that it was frustrating for staff that the significant improvements made in Adoption and Fostering services had not resulted in an uplift in gradings due to the grading descriptors being revised.

It was commented that it was pleasing to see that the grades in respect of the Islesburgh Out of School service were now rated as "very good".

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee NOTED the content of the report.

45/18

Asset Investment Plan - Business Case: Residential Childcare

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Capital Programme (CPS-11-18-F) presenting an asset investment proposal for approval.

The Executive Manager – Capital Programme summarised the main terms of the report, advising that a Strategic Outline Case had been prepared, a preferred option for the way forward had been identified, and it was proposed that a Full Business Case (FBC) should now be developed in line with the Council's Gateway Process for the Management of Capital Projects.

The Deputy Executive Manager – Children's Social Work referred Members to the table illustrating the actual number of residential placements in Shetland and future projections. He advised that the early intervention work currently being carried out would be well-established by 2023, and this should counteract an anticipated increase in demand for residential childcare placements. Revenue savings would

be realised from reducing the requirement for costly out-of-island placements, and there would be more efficient use of staff, as well as reduced energy and property costs. These costs would be developed more fully in the FBC.

The Executive Manager – Capital Programme and the Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Social Work then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- Early intervention and the provision of good-quality responsive services locally would reduce the requirement for off-island provision, but it would still be necessary where specialist input or secure care was required. The cost of commissioning these places would have to be met from contingencies.
- Existing Council establishments and buildings had been considered as part of the process of looking at the options available, but the preferred option was a new-build in Tingwall. Shortlisted options would be revisited as part of the FBC.
- A wide range of staff from the Council and partner organisations and agencies had been involved in the strategic workshop about developing more capacity locally, and the critical success factors had been developed afterwards.

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

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee

- NOTED the information set out in the report and its Appendix
- CONSIDERED the impact on the services and functions reporting to the Education and Families Committee
- RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Resources Committee that the Director of Children’s Services develop a Full Business Case in relation to Residential Childcare for Looked After Children, as described in Appendix A to the report

46/18

Active Shetland Strategy - 2018-2023

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Sport and Leisure (CS-44-18-F) presenting the Active Shetland Strategy 2018-2023 for approval.

The Executive Manager – Sport and Leisure introduced the report, advising that the Strategy had been developed in partnership with local and national organisations. There was growing evidence in relation to the positive contribution that physical activity had on physical and mental wellbeing, and the Strategy was seeking to enhance participation opportunities. There were a range of outcome indicators that would be used to measure progress – some were local and others had been developed from the Scottish Household Survey. He advised that it had been noted that there were some typographical errors in the Strategy, and these would be corrected prior to publication.

The Executive Manager – Sport and Leisure then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- A number of events involving community and sports groups and partner agencies had taken place to help develop the Strategy.
- A number of strategic issues had been identified and would be looked at during the delivery phase, and these included financial and transport barriers to participation. There would be discussions about how to overcome these barriers so that participation could be supported.
- Consideration would also be given to how participation in physical activity could enhance self-esteem and body confidence in teenagers, and some projects had been run in the past.
- The introduction of asymmetric timetabling in secondary schools had increased the ability to fit up to two periods of PE into secondary school timetables. This now means that the Council is meeting the national target and is doing well in comparison to national figures.
- The Active Shetland Strategic Group would be part of the delivery group set up to help deliver the Strategy, and the key indicators would be developed to illustrate trends and improvement.
- It was recognised nationally that there was a need to do more early intervention in order to tackle childhood obesity. Active Schools had been involved in working with primary and nursery schools locally, but in future it is hoped that there will be an increased focus on working with nursery and early learning settings to get more children active and promote physical activity at an earlier age.

It was commented that there was a need to invest in community education about the importance of physical activity for all generations. Facilities available locally were excellent, and it was important that there was discussion at Shetland Partnership level about how to reduce barriers to participation and ensure that as many people as possible could access these community facilities and resources, bearing in mind that the financial resources available needed to ensure that these facilities remained viable.

On the motion of Mr T Smith, seconded by Mr Coutts, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee RECOMMENDED that the Policy and Resources Committee RECOMMENDS that the Council approve the proposed Active Shetland Strategy 2018-2023, and agrees that it replaces the Sports and Physical Activity Strategy within Part A of the Council's Constitution and Policy Framework, to be managed by the Education and Families Committee.

The meeting concluded at 3.45pm.

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Chair