

MINUTES

A&B - Public

**Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 2 September 2019 at 10.00am**

Present:

Councillors:

P Campbell	S Coutts
C Hughson	E Macdonald
R McGregor	D Sandison
G Smith	T Smith
R Thomson	

Religious Representatives:

H Rankine	T Macintyre
M Tregonning	

Apologies:

J Fraser	B Wishart
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In Attendance:

M Sandison, Chief Executive
H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
R Calder, Acting Executive Manager – Quality Improvement
B Kerr, Communications Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
M Thomson, Management Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also:

L Anderson, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP)
J Dorrat, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP)
L Bisset, Eco Youth Shetland
I Johnson, Eco Youth Shetland
C Verdcourt-Lawrence, Eco Youth Shetland
M Summers, Youth Development Worker

Chairperson

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair welcomed the two new MSYPs to the meeting, and said he would welcome their contributions to the Committee. He also congratulated the Depute Convener and member of the Committee, Ms Wishart, on her appointment as Member of the Scottish Parliament, and said he looked forward to working closely with her in her new role.

Deputation

The Chair advised following their successful Eco Strike march and meeting at the Town Hall regarding Climate Change, young people had indicated to him that they did not get enough opportunities to engage with the Council, and he had suggested that they send a deputation to this meeting.

He confirmed that the application for a deputation had been received in accordance with Section 17 of the Council's Standing Orders and, in accordance with the Standing Orders, he was required to ask the Committee if it unanimously agreed to hear the deputation.

The Committee unanimously agreed to hear the deputation.

Ms Bisset, Ms Johnson and Ms Verdcourt-Lawrence then gave a presentation to the Committee on the climate crisis, outlining the effects it was having; how young people were getting involved; and different ways the Council could improve things. They highlighted a number of ways in which the Council could take action - particularly in respect of recycling, housing and transport – and went on to speak about some projects that had been undertaken in Orkney. They concluded by saying that they would like people to speak about climate change, and for a plan to be created to resolve the climate crisis, and they questioned what would need to happen if a climate emergency was not declared now.

Responding to some of the issues raised in the presentation, the Chief Executive advised that although the focus was initially on domestic recycling, the Council had always planned to roll out commercial recycling. This would be done once the new recycling shed with a separation facility was complete, and she extended an invitation for Eco Youth to visit the facility when it was complete. Because recycling plastic waste was very complicated, most sites did not take the whole range of plastic, and the Government and producers had a role to play in producing packaging that could be recycled. Bottle recycling schemes were being introduced in Scotland, and consideration would be given to how this would work in a rural area. The Council had had recently installed solar panels in Edward Thomason and Taing House, and would be monitoring their impact in terms of payback. Wind turbines had also been installed at various sites, and tidal energy was also being considered in the shift towards greener solutions. The opportunities for a 'greener' ferry fleet had been emphasised in the case that the Council had made to the Scottish Government for full and fair ferry funding. The Council had a Carbon Management Plan and a role in managing the energy it produced, but it was part of a partnership of community and individual solutions.

The Director of Children's Services responded to the survey that Eco Youth had carried out regarding plastic waste in schools, and advised that the catering service was already looking at reducing plastic waste and some progress had already been made. She extended an invitation to Eco Youth to meet with the catering manager to discuss this further.

Following questions from Members to the deputation, the Committee noted the deputation.

The Chair thanked Ms Bisset, Ms Johnson and Ms Verdcourt-Lawrence for their presentation. He went on to say it was important that the community worked together, however there was no point in declaring a climate emergency if it was an empty promise. The Council should consider doing so when it was confident it knew what its carbon use was and how it could be improved, so that it could demonstrate that it was taking action.

Declarations of Interest

None

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2019 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr Sandison.

26/19 Children's Services Directorate Performance Report – Quarter 1: Period to 30 June 2019

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-27-19-F) summarising the activity and performance of the Children's Services Directorate for the first quarter of 2019/20.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular that the predicted overspend was something that was being monitored closely. She advised that the building works at three early learning and childcare settings had been completed over the summer, but it had been necessary to put in alternative arrangements at Sound School as work was ongoing. She thanked staff at all settings for their work in making the settings ready.

(Ms Macdonald left the meeting during the following discussion)

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

- Contingency plans had been in place for each of the early learning and childcare settings in case building work was not completed in time. It was intended to use the October holidays to move back to Sound School nursery so that no further time was lost there. She was taking a personal interest in this setting, and visiting the site each week to check on progress. A number of factors had caused the delay – largely workforce availability for the size and scale of the works – but there were no cost implications for the Council.
- Agency staff had been required to cover vacant posts and where experienced staff had been required at short notice, and the budget set aside for vacancies covered some of the costs. It had not been possible to fill some vacant posts at managerial level, and workforce development was taking place to train staff so that they could be employed in managerial roles in future. She did not have information available as to the approximate additional cost per post of employing agency staff, but she would arrange to provide more detail around this. Children's Services staff attended various events on the mainland to promote posts within the Council, and the Council was carrying out work to promote Shetland as a place to live and work.
- More resources than predicted had been required for the school condition survey as some of the information currently held was older than anticipated. A group of staff – which also included building maintenance and capital projects staff – had carried out an overarching survey covering a wide area to ensure the suitability and accessibility of the current school estate. Once the work had been completed, it was proposed to hold a seminar for Members.
- The Scottish Government had committed to having counsellors in secondary schools, but it was yet to be determined what funding would be received and how

this could best be provided locally. The Emotional Wellbeing project was progressing, and this would help shape how things would move forward in the future.

- Children's Services were working closely with Capital Projects in respect of the Shetland Library refurbishment, and a briefing note illustrating the timeframe would be issued.

It was commented that it was very disappointing that the works at Sound School had not been completed in time, given that the Committee had stressed the importance of the completion date and officers had been confident that all works could be completed on time. There was frustration that there had ended up being a delay, particularly as this had resulted in extra costs to the Council in the past. However it was pointed out that it had been noted that the timescale for completion of the projects had been tight, and that officers could not give assurances on factors that were outwith the Council's control, as had been the case on this occasion. A contingency plan had been in place to ensure that disruption was minimised, and the Director of Children's Services had confirmed she was doing what she could to ensure that the project was completed by the October holidays.

The Solicitor pointed out that despite this delay, the Council would still be implementing the 1140 hours well ahead of the required deadline of August 2020.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

(Ms Rankine left the meeting)

27/19

Update: Northern Alliance

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-18-19-F) outlining the progress of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Northern Alliance was now working towards its 2019 Regional Improvement Plan and the bid for funding was ready to be submitted. The key work streams for the new plan had been identified in line with the National Improvement Framework priorities – curriculum; raising attainment and closing the poverty gap; sustaining education in our communities; and leadership. She was the sponsor for closing the poverty related attainment gap workstream, and a lot of work had already been done on this locally.

The Chair requested that when the Regional Improvement Plan was presented to the Committee, information was also made available regarding the difference the regional improvement collaborative had made over the last year, and what was sought for Shetland over the next year.

In response to a question regarding youth engagement, the Director of Children's Services advised that youth participation was seen as a priority area, and within the Plan there would be a section looking at that in more detail. She would be happy to share this information with the MSYPs.

Decision:

The Committee noted the progress of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative.

28/19

External Audit Reports – Care Inspectorate Report on the Anderson High School Halls of Residence

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Quality Improvement (CS-26-19-F) presenting the Care Inspectorate Report on the Anderson High School Halls of Residence.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Care Inspectorate had made reference to the outstanding environment in its report, as well as highlighting a number of other strengths. The areas for improvement that had been identified were already being taken forward.

It was commented that while the report was encouraging, it was disappointing that the grades had slipped back. This was possibly because of the very small sample involved – only five young people had been interviewed – and it was suggested that this was something the Care Inspectorate should be questioned about.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement advised that the inspection had been unannounced, and it was unfortunate that it had taken place at a time when many of the students were on study leave. The grades awarded recognised that the halls of residence had been through a period of transition, with both a change of building and a change of manager.

It was questioned why mentoring of younger students by older ones did not still take place.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement explained that it was felt that there were now a number of other opportunities for mentoring to take place as there were a number of different groups within the halls of residence. However in light of the report, this was something that would be reinstated. He also confirmed that there had been two visits to complete the inspection, as the manager had been on annual leave when the first unannounced visit had taken place.

The Chair advised that he was encouraged by the report as it recognised that there had been a period of transition with a change in building and a change in manager, and it provided a good foundation for the future.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the Care Inspectorate Report on the Anderson High School Halls of Residence.

Before the meeting concluded, the Executive Manager – Quality Improvement advised that the Care Inspectorate Report on Nesting Primary School had just been published and the full report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee. A number of strengths had been identified and commented on, and it was a satisfactory report.

The meeting concluded at 11.35am.

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Chair