

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**EDUCATION, LEARNING AND LEISURE COMMITTEE****WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 27 AUGUST, 2015**

Present: Councillor A Evison (Chair), Ms S Smith, Dr E Anderson, Dr I R Findlay, Mrs M Nelson, Councillors A M Allan (substitute for Councillor A J Allan), A S Buchan, C C Buchan, G W Carr, L Clark (substitute for Councillor Dick), I Davidson, M A Findlater, M A Ford, M F Ingleby, C R McKail, F McRae, L Pirie and M J Roy (substitute for Councillor Bellarby).

Apologies: Councillors A J Allan, P W Bellarby, J B Dick and Mr D Bilsland.

Officers: Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Primary and Curriculum Development, Head of Secondary and Additional Support, Head of Resources and Performance, Head of Lifelong Learning and Leisure, Head of Children's Services, Quality Improvement Officer (Ms Hendry), Asset Project Leader, Project Officer (Ms Jarvis), Principal Solicitor (Governance), Chief Accountant, Senior Auditor (Ms Beattie) and Principal Committee Officer.

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. No interests were intimated.

2. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In making decisions on the following items of business, the Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 149 of the Equality Act, 2010:-

- (1) to have due regard to the need to:-
 - (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- (2) where an Equality Impact Assessment was provided, to consider its contents and take those into account when reaching their decision.

3. ABERDEENSHIRE SCOTTISH QUALIFICATIONS AUTHORITY EXAMINATION RESULTS - INITIAL ANALYSIS 2015

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 9 October, 2014 (Item 2, Page 858), there had been circulated a report dated 6 August, 2015, by the Director of Education and Children's Services providing an initial analysis of attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination results in Aberdeenshire schools for the year ending June 2015. The report stated that the data was 'raw' data from SQA which allowed limited analysis at school level and there were a number of factors during the second year of new National Qualifications which affected the validity of any direct comparisons between attainment in 2015 and previous years. Nevertheless there were notable successes in overall performance at stages S4, S5 and S6 across a range of measures and the performance of special schools had been very strong, with significant progress made in ensuring that special school Senior Phase pupils could access the full National Qualification framework.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the performance of Aberdeenshire academies in the national SQA diet of examinations in 2015 based on 'raw' SQA data, and that full Insight analysis would be available in early September,
- (2) to acknowledge the significant levels of improvement in measures across S4, S5 and S6 and the hard work of pupils, parents and school staff in achieving these results,
- (3) to approve the areas of continued focus to ensure that the level of improvement was maintained year on year, and
- (4) that a letter from the Committee be sent to the head teachers of special schools congratulating them on the improved performance.

4. CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE PORTLETHEN PRIMARY SCHOOL NETWORK

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 4 December, 2014 (Item 4, Page 1211), there had been circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services on the outcome of formal consultation on proposals regarding the rezoning and provision of an additional school for the Portlethen area. The report stated that the recommendation from officers was to continue with the delivery of a new school at Hillside and to adopt the zoning proposals referred to as the 'Preferred Option' and as shown at Appendix A in the consultation document. The Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee on 30 June, 2015 (Item 9 refers), had agreed to recommend that the proposals contained within the report be adopted.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the formal report on the consultation regarding the review of the Portlethen Primary School Network and provision of an additional school at Hillside,
- (2) to note the comments of the Kincardine and Mearns Area Committee, and
- (3) to adopt the proposals referred to as the 'Preferred Option' and as shown at Appendix A in the consultation document which was attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

5. CONSULTATION REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF BANCHORY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND HILL OF BANCHORY SCHOOL ZONES

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 4 December, 2014 (Item 4, Page 1211), there had been circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services on the outcome of formal consultation on proposals regarding the rezoning of the catchment areas for Banchory and Hill of Banchory Primary Schools. The report stated that the recommendation from officers was to adopt the zoning proposals and implement the new catchment areas for Banchory and Hill of Banchory Primary Schools as shown at Appendix A in the consultation document with effect from 31 August, 2015. The Marr Area Committee on 18 August, 2015 (Item 6 refers), had agreed to request that Education and Children's Services undertake an assessment of the future suitability and condition of Banchory Primary School, to include consideration of delivering outcomes on Safe Routes to Schools and playground condition, and to report back to the Committee.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the formal report on the consultation regarding the review of Banchory and Hill of Banchory Primary School zones,
- (2) to note the comments of the Marr Area Committee, and
- (3) to adopt the proposals as shown at Appendix A in the consultation document which was attached as Appendix 1 of the report.

6. STRACHAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

There had been circulated a report dated 29 July, 2015, by the Director of Education and Children's Services advising of circumstances which had resulted in a decision being taken to mothball Strachan Primary School. The report stated that in June 2015 a significant number of parents had decided to submit placing requests to enrol their children in other local schools, and it became apparent that there would be only two families who intended that their children would remain on the school roll. It was the view of the service that appropriate educational experiences for the remaining pupils were not viable at the school due to the very small number of pupils remaining, and a decision was taken by the service to temporarily mothball the school from 18 August, 2015. Mothballing was the temporary closure of a school which did not in itself lead to statutory consultation.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the mothballing of Strachan Primary School,
- (2) to instruct the Director of Education and Children's Services to provide an update report to the Committee on 8 October, 2015, and
- (3) that, during the mothballed period, the designated school would be Banchory Primary School.

7. PROMOTING ATTENDANCE AND MANAGING PUPIL ABSENCE

There had been circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services presenting a proposed policy on promoting attendance and managing pupil absence and associated guidelines for use in nursery, primary, secondary and special schools. The report stated that there was a recognised correlation between non-attendance and levels of attainment, and pupils who fail to attend are unlikely to achieve. The policy provided a clear and consistent framework for all staff to promote attendance and manage absence and took account of legislation to promote school attendance and manage absence, with the aim of improving overall levels of attendance. Guidance for schools had been prepared which would support schools in implementing this policy.

During discussion, the Chair referred to the attendance at the meeting of representatives from Aberdeenshire Youth Council as observers and expressed the wish that young people could play a more participatory role in the committee in future. She advised that there was an issue the Youth Council wished to raise about the Guidelines on Managing and Promoting Pupil Attendance in Secondary Schools and read out an amendment they had proposed to be included on page 16 of the committee report which was intended to provide for head teachers, in consultation with others, to have the discretion to introduce limited self-certification for short periods of absence for senior pupils, and in other exceptional circumstances.

The Committee **agreed** to approve the policy on promoting attendance and managing pupil absence, subject to officers including in the Guidelines on Managing and Promoting Pupil Attendance in Secondary Schools an additional paragraph which would meet the intentions of the amendment proposed by the Youth Council.

8. ABERDEENSHIRE COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 29 May, 2014 (Item 11, Page 1898), there had been circulated a report dated 23 July, 2015, by the Director of Education and Children's Services presenting a Community Learning and Development (CLD) partnership plan for the Community Planning Partnership area. The report stated that the plan was a partnership agreement between CLD providers which set out what different partners would be doing over the life of the plan, how the local authority would enhance the co-ordination of work and what key needs would not be met. It was intended to be a practical tool focused on outcomes and outputs which would make a positive difference in the lives of individuals and communities. A series of practical action plans were being developed which would deliver on these outcomes, and have clear performance measures to provide a locus for future scrutiny.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the development process for the Aberdeenshire Community Learning Plan, in particular the involvement and consideration of the Community Planning Partnership Board and Area Committees,
- (2) to note the Plan's status as a partnership document between community learning and development providers, and its status in complementing the Council's Communities and Partnership Strategy, and
- (3) to endorse the Community Learning and Development Plan.

9. ABERDEENSHIRE'S SCHOOLS ENHANCED PROVISION - REPORT ON THE STATUTORY CONSULTATION FOR CRIMOND SCHOOL AND KELLANDS SCHOOL LEARNING (DYSLEXIA) UNITS

Prior to consideration of this item, the Principal Solicitor (Governance) advised that there was no requirement to suspend Standing Order 18 to allow reconsideration of this matter as the decision taken at the meeting of 28 May, 2015, could not be implemented.

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 28 May, 2015 (Item 3), there had been circulated a report dated 10 August, 2015, by the Director of Education and Children's Services on the outcome of formal consultation on proposals for the redesign of the support and reallocation of the dyslexia units at Crimond and Kellands Schools to an area model. The report stated that the Buchan Area Committee on 21 April, 2015 (Item 13 refers) had agreed to recommend the adoption of the proposals, subject to a number of comments. The Garioch Area Committee on 21 April, 2015 (Item 14 refers) had agreed to recommend acceptance of the need to move to the new model with best practice in all schools, that support be put in place so that there was no further need to refer pupils to the dyslexia unit, and that the dyslexia unit should only cease to exist when all the pupils currently attending had completed their allocated time in the unit. In response to the comments from Area Committees and after full consideration of parental concerns, the recommendations from officers were set out in section 2.5 of the report, including a revised phased implementation timescale extended to March 2016.

The report advised that the Committee on 28 May, 2015, had approved the proposals outlined in section 2.5 of the report and officers were requested to notify Scottish Ministers of the decision in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Inadvertently, the notification to the Scottish Ministers was not given as required in terms of the said Act.

Members were asked, therefore, to rescind the full decision made by the Committee on 28 May 2015 and approve the recommendations detailed in section 1 of the report.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the circumstances of the matter considered at the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee on 28 May 2015, as detailed in section 2.7 of the report,
- (2) to rescind the decision made at that Committee,
- (3) to note the comments of the Buchan and Garioch Area Committees,
- (4) to note the contents of the Consultation Report as detailed in Appendix A to the report,
- (5) to note the contents of the Consultation Proposal as detailed in Appendix B to the report,
- (6) to approve the recommendations set out in section 2.5 of the report with timescales,
- (7) to instruct officers to notify Scottish Ministers within 6 working days of the decision in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010,
- (8) to acknowledge the educational contribution of the units at Crimond and Kellands, and
- (9) to approve the submission of further report to the Committee in a year's time including an external evaluation of the progress of this service.

10. NOMINATIONS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 21 March, 2013 (Item 3, Page 1986), there had been circulated a report dated 22 July, 2015, by the Director of Business Services inviting the Committee to consider whether it wished to make any changes to the nominations to outside bodies listed in the Appendix to the report.

The Committee **agreed** to nominate members to outside bodies as follows:-

County of Banff Bursary Fund - Councillor Findlater.

Dick Bequest Trust - Councillors C C Buchan and Davidson.

Robb's Trust - Councillors Davidson, Gifford and Hood.

Robert Nicol Trust - Councillor McKail.

Scottish Lighthouse Museum - Councillors C C Buchan and Robertson.

Aberdeenshire Sports Council - Councillor Pirie, with Councillor McKail as his nominated substitute.

11. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

There had been circulated a report dated 17 August, 2015, by the Chief Internal Auditor on recent internal audit reports outlining audits into Teachers Payroll, Purchasing and Creditors Procedures, Fostering, Adoption and Kinship Allowances, Learning through Technology and Supply Teachers Payroll, together with an appendix setting out the progress made by

Education and Children's Services in implementing recommendations made in previous internal audit reports which should have been implemented by 30 June, 2015.

The Committee **agreed** to note the contents of the report and the attached appendices.