

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 17 MAY, 2018

Present: Councillors G L Owen (Chair) and M A Findlater (Vice-Chair), Dr E Anderson, Mr D Bilsland, Mrs R Paterson, and Councillors R E Bruce, C C Buchan, S A Dickinson, A E M Evison, M A Ford, P E Gibb (as substitute for Councillor M A Buchan), V G Harper, M F Ingleby, C R McKail, A M Simpson, J M Whyte and L G L Wilson.

Apologies: Councillor M A Buchan and Ms A Guy.

Officers: Interim Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Primary Education and Curriculum Development, Head of Secondary Education and Additional Support, Corporate Finance Manager, Principal Solicitor (Democratic Services) and Senior Committee Officer (Allan Bell).

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 declared.

2A. PUBLIC SECTOR EQUALITY DUTY

In taking decisions on the undernoted 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, and
- (2) to consider, where an equality impact assessment has been provided, its contents and take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

2B. EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee **agreed**, in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the Item specified below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the undernoted paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No

Paragraph No of Schedule 7A

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3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF 22 MARCH, 2018

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 22 March, 2018, members **agreed** to amend Item 7 to include the word “only”. The Minute was thereafter **approved** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. NORTHERN ALLIANCE REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: CONSULTATION

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 25 April, 2018, by the Interim Director of Education and Children’s Services (1) which explained the background to the operation of the Northern Alliance, a regional improvement collaborative venture between local authorities across the north of Scotland, which had submitted an initial draft Regional Improvement Plan to Education Scotland and in respect of which feedback was subsequently received, (2) which advised that further consultation on the Plan would take place with key stakeholders, including head teachers, staff, parents and young people, prior to the compilation of a final version of the Plan for submission to the Scottish Government, (3) which set out the high-level improvement priorities which the Plan sought to attain, (4) which specified the key milestones to be achieved in the development of the Plan and (5) to which was appended a copy of the draft Regional Improvement Framework Plan for 2018.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the contents of the draft Plan for the Northern Alliance,
- (2) **noted** members’ comments in respect of a reduction in the use of jargon, child poverty, English as a second language, out of authority placements, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) children in schools, child and family-centred approaches to education, emerging literacy, parental engagement, autism, and the relationship between the Committee and the Northern Alliance,
- (3) **agreed** that the Plan should be circulated to area committees for comment,
- (4) **agreed** that wider consultation should take place with relevant stakeholders, and
- (5) **noted** that a final version of the Plan would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 30 August, 2018.

5. STRACHAN SCHOOL

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 31 August, 2017 (Item 12), when (1) it had been agreed to “mothball” Strachan Primary School, as a result of the school roll being anticipated to fall to 0 pupils and (2) the Director of Education and Children’s Services had been instructed to submit an update report to the Committee when required, there was circulated a report by the Interim Director of Education and Children’s Services, which (1) explained the background to issues relating to the operation of the school in recent years, (2) advised that the school had been mothballed throughout the 2017/2018 school session and that, as no approaches had been made for Primary 1 pupils to be enrolled at the school from August, 2018, it had been decided to continue to mothball the school for the 2018/2019 session and (3) outlined a number of options in respect of the continuing deployment of the school and engagement thereon with the local community.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the preparation of an options appraisal on the future of Strachan School, with one potential option being permanent closure of the school,

- (2) **agreed** to support community engagement as part of the options appraisal process, in order to identify alternative options for consideration, and
- (3) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit a further report on the matter in due course.

6. LONGHAVEN SCHOOL

There was circulated and **noted** a report by the Interim Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that the sole applicant for the vacant post of Head Teacher at Longhaven School had withdrawn their application and that the existing Head Teacher and Principal Teacher were no longer able to continue delivering education at the school, (2) advised that the roll had fallen to five pupils after the Easter holidays, (3) which detailed consultation which had taken place with the parents of the remaining pupils regarding issues facing the school and (4) indicated that further attempts to recruit a Head Teacher had so far been unsuccessful.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** that a further report on the matter should be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in October, 2018.

7. COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2022 - DELIVERY

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 23 November, 2017 (Item 10), when approval had been given to the Council Plan for 2017-2022, together with a number of associated priorities, there was circulated a report dated 2 April, 2018, by the Interim Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained that officers had been developing the governance, performance and scrutiny arrangements for the Council Plan, (2) which advised that each of the priorities would be led by a specific Directorate of the Council, with expected outcomes identified for each priority and actions to be undertaken to deliver those priorities, (3) which detailed the specific priorities for which Education and Children's Services Committee would have the scrutiny responsibility and (4) to which was appended a list of all the Council priorities and the lead Directorate for each, together with those which had associated involvement.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** members' comments on the report in respect of wider achievements, the needs of the child, the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, the oversight of Council priorities and network connectivity,
- (2) **agreed** the Council Plan 2017-2022 priorities for scrutiny,
- (3) **agreed** that a seminar should take place on the delivery plans and proposed measures of success, to include consideration of key performance indicators, and
- (4) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to report to the Committee on at least a six monthly basis, providing evidence of progress with delivery of the Council Plan.

8. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE EXCEPTION REPORTING (JANUARY – MARCH, 2018)

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 23 March, 2017 (Item 11), when approval had been given to the Education and Children's Services Service Plan 2017-2020, there was circulated a report dated 20 April, 2018, by the Interim Director of Education

and Children's Services, which advised members of the performance of the Service against key performance measures and associated targets.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the performance achieved in the quarter between January and March, 2018, as detailed within the report,
- (2) **noted** measures where performance had been below expectations during that quarter, as identified within the report,
- (3) **noted** the publication of the complete quarterly performance report on Ward Pages, and
- (4) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to continue to report, on an exception basis, quarterly in respect of performance measures against Service objectives.

9. SCRUTINY REFERRAL FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE – INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Audit Committee of 21 March, 2018 (Item 5), when it had been agreed that, in respect of the Internal Audit report on secondary schools, a further report should be submitted to the meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee on 17 May, 2018, requesting that that Committee conduct a Committee Review Process in respect of the matter, there was circulated a report dated 11 April, 2018, by the Director of Business Services, which (1) explained the Audit Committee's powers in respect of the scrutiny of service delivery, including requesting that a policy committee conduct a Committee Review Process regarding a specific issue and (2) highlighted the receiving Committee's options in respect of disposing of the matter.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the referral from the Audit Committee to conduct a Committee Review Process in respect of the matter of service delivery identified for improvement in secondary schools,
- (2) **agreed** to conduct the Committee Review Process and that the Director of Education and Children's Services should submit a stage 1 report to the meeting of the Committee on 30 August, 2018, and
- (3) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit a report to the meeting of the Audit Committee on 24 May, 2018, indicating the Education and Children's Services Committee's decision.

10. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORKPLAN

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 1 February, 2018 (Item 14), when approval had been given to the annual Directorate Workplan for financial year 2018/2019, there was circulated a report dated 10 April, 2018, by the Interim Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided details of an additional project proposed for inclusion within the Workplan.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Education and Children's Services Directorate Workplan, as contained within an appendix to the report,

- (2) **approved** the addition of the item described to the Directorate Workplan,
- (3) **approved** the business case for MCR Pathways, as specified within an appendix to the report, and
- (4) **requested** the Director of Education and Children's Services to arrange a presentation to members, on a future date, in respect of the mentoring programme which had been approved.

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