

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 11 OCTOBER, 2018

Present: Councillor G L Owen (Chair), Dr E Anderson, Mr D Bilsland and Ms A Guy, and Councillors K I Adam (as substitute for Councillor A E M Evison), D R Beagrie (as substitute for Councillor C R McKail), R E Bruce, C C Buchan, M A Buchan, S A Dickinson, M A Ford, V G Harper, F C P Hood (as substitute for Councillor M A Findlater), A F Kille (as substitute for Councillor M F Ingleby), E A Stirling (as substitute for Councillor A M Simpson), J M Whyte and L G L Wilson.

Apologies: Mrs R Paterson and Councillors M A Findlater, A E M Evison, M F Ingleby, C R McKail and A M Simpson.

Officers: Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Resources and Performance, Corporate Finance Manager, Lead Officer (Primary Education), Principal Solicitor (Democratic Services) and Senior Committee Officer (Allan Bell).

BODDAM SCHOOL CHOIR

Members viewed a video of a performance by Boddam School Choir and commended all the children taking part for their efforts.

1. SEDERUNT AND DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare, in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Councillor CC Buchan declared an interest in Item 5, by virtue of his employment with the Scottish Qualifications Authority but, having applied the objective test, had concluded the interest to be so remote and insignificant that he would remain and participate in the item in question.

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 Item 13 below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in paragraph 8 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 30 AUGUST, 2018

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 30 August, 2018, members **agreed** to amend Item 6 to record that one of the young people attending was a pupil at Mearns Academy and to adjust the spelling of the other's surname to read "MacRae". The Minute was otherwise **approved** as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4. PROGRESS WITH OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There was circulated a report by the Director of Business Services, which updated members on progress made with actions agreed at previous meetings of the Education and Children's Services Committee held since 14 June, 2017.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the current position with actions arising at previous meetings,
- (2) **agreed** that those actions which had been completed should be removed from the outstanding actions list, and
- (3) **agreed** that substitute members of the Committee should also be invited to the proposed workshop for substantive members, on the implementation of the Early Learning and Childcare Scotland 2017/18 Action Plan.

5. ANALYSIS OF ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN ABERDEENSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ACCREDITED AWARDS (YEAR ENDING JUNE, 2018)

There was circulated and **noted** a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained the background to the Scottish Government's benchmarking system, providing data and analysis on the achievements of young people in Aberdeenshire presented for Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) national courses and units in 2018, (2) highlighted the removal of the need for National 5 pupils to complete and pass internally-assessed unit assessments in session 2017/18, (3) advised that the key national benchmarking measures related to improving attainment in literacy and numeracy and for everyone, increasing post-school participation, and reducing the "attainment gap" between lower and higher attainers and (4) outlined the purpose of the "virtual comparator", generated by randomly selecting young people across Scotland whose characteristics matched those Aberdeenshire pupils being evaluated.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** members' comments regarding the "attainment gap", changes in the structure of examinations year-on-year, college attendances by school pupils, the impact of social deprivation on attainment and achievement, the Pupil Equity Fund, post-

school destinations for leavers, care-experienced young people and improvement measures,

- (2) **agreed** that a further report on achievement and attainment, providing information at individual school level, should be submitted to each area committee,
- (3) **requested** officers to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee, providing statistical trends, over a period of several years, in order to assess the Council's performance over that period, against relevant Council priorities, and
- (4) **congratulated** young people, their parents and carers, teachers and support staff, as well as wider children's services across Aberdeenshire, on the level of success and achievement outlined within the report.

6. PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGEMENT OPTIONS

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 1 October, 2018 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that a working group had been established in 2016 to review the management and staffing of primary schools, including the use of "cluster head teacher" arrangements, (2) outlined current arrangements for class teaching and management time by way of a formula, (3) specified the criteria for the operation of cluster management arrangements in schools within Aberdeenshire where these arrangements currently operated, and (4) highlighted future options in this regard.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the progress of the working group to date,
- (2) **agreed** to retain the current cluster head teacher arrangements, pending the outcome of a wider review of management and staffing arrangements in primary schools, and
- (3) **requested** the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit a progress report to a future meeting of the Committee, incorporating guidelines and good practice for shared head teacher arrangements.

7. DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE LEARNING ESTATE

The Committee **agreed** to suspend Standing Order 2.1.2, in order to allow the meeting to continue beyond 1.00p.m.

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee of 7 February, 2013 (Item 8), when members had approved a number of strategic principles and actions for the review of the Aberdeenshire Primary Schools Estate, there was circulated and **noted** a report dated 26 September, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, to which was appended a document detailing the current overview and proposed process for reviewing the Primary Schools Estate.

After detailed consideration, the Committee **agreed** that the presumption of local provision should be part of the Council's approach to future educational delivery.

Thereafter, Councillor Owen, seconded by Councillor Bruce, **moved** that the Committee approve the proposed approach contained within the appendix to the report and that further updates on the progress of the review should be submitted to the Committee.

As an amendment, Councillor C C Buchan, seconded by Councillor Wilson, **moved** that officers submit a further report to a future meeting of the Committee with more emphasis on the role of parents and communities in any decision about educational change.

Members of the Committee voted as follows:-

for the motion	(11)	Dr Anderson, and Councillors Owen, Beagrie, Bruce, M Buchan, Dickinson, Ford, Hood, McKail, Stirling and Whyte.
for the amendment	(4)	Councillors Adam, C C Buchan, Harper and Wilson.

The **motion** was carried in the following terms:-

that the Committee approve the proposed approach contained within the appendix to the report and that further updates on the progress of the review be submitted to the Committee.

8. CONDITION AND SUITABILITY CORE FACTS

Consideration was given to a circulated report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained the background to the assessment by Council officers of the condition and suitability of the schools portfolio, in line with Scottish Government guidance and (2) advised that revisions had been made to the methodology for assessing the condition of schools and their suitability as being fit for purpose for delivering the education curriculum.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** changes to the methodologies for assessing suitability and condition core facts, in respect of the schools portfolio, and
- (2) **agreed** that reports on the outcomes of the revised assessments should be submitted to meetings of appropriate area committees and to the Education and Children's Services Committee.

9. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021 – “LEARNING TOGETHER IN ABERDEENSHIRE”

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 21 September, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the draft Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2018 – 2021, aimed at improving the quality and extent of parents' involvement in their child's learning, (2) which highlighted the factors which had influenced the development of the Strategy and the accompanying action plan, (3) which outlined arrangements for consulting on the draft Strategy and the Family Learning Delivery Plan with key stakeholders such as parents, parent forums, school staff and others and (4) to which were appended the schedule of consultations to take place over the forthcoming weeks, together with a copy of the Strategy itself and the Action Plan 2018 – 2021.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **agreed** to consult with key stakeholders, as listed within the report, on the draft Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy,

- (2) **agreed** to develop an Aberdeenshire Parents' Charter, through parent workshops and focus groups, and
- (3) **instructed** the Parental Engagement Support Hub Aberdeenshire (PESHA) to make a presentation on the finalised strategy at the meeting of the Committee on 7 February, 2019.

10. LONGHAVEN SCHOOL

With reference to Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 17 May, 2018 (Item 6), when it had been explained that (1) 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 to delivering education at the school, (2) the roll had fallen to five pupils after the Easter holidays, (3) consultation had taken place with the parents of the remaining pupils, (4) further attempts to recruit a Head Teacher had proven unsuccessful and (5) a further report would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in October, 2018, there was circulated and **noted** a report dated 26 September, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which explained (1) the background to the staffing situation affecting Longhaven School, (2) that the five remaining pupils had been successfully placed at other schools within the Peterhead Schools cluster, (3) that a decision had been taken by officers to "mothball" the school, on a temporary basis, from 12 October, 2018, in accordance with Scottish Government statutory guidance, and (4) that the situation at Longhaven would continue to be monitored by officers.

After consideration, the Committee **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit an update report to the meeting of the Committee on 7 February, 2019.

11. EDUCATION AND LEARNING PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM GYPSY/TRAVELLER COMMUNITIES

There was circulated and **noted** a report dated 15 September, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the right to education of all children and young people in Scotland, including gypsy/traveller children, (2) which detailed appropriate learning provision for children from within the travelling culture, based on a mixed model of delivery, and facilitated by partnership working to support families, children and young people from the travelling culture within Aberdeenshire, (3) to which were appended copies of a number of productions by the Council, detailing support for Early Years learning and for learners within Broad General Education (BGE), and guidance to support learners from gypsy/traveller communities and (4) which highlighted future steps designed to take account of local priorities, together with national initiatives relating to tackling child poverty and supporting delivery of education to gypsy/traveller families.

After detailed consideration, during which the Committee **noted** members' comments in respect of the need for continuity in the Council's work with gypsies/travellers, ensuring that gypsy/traveller pupils' records of achievement were passed from one school to another as pupils moved on, engagement with parents of gypsy/traveller children, the challenges inherent in reconciling cultural choices with educational requirements, and the need to highlight, in information and guidance made available, the range of cultural values held by gypsy/traveller communities, the Committee **agreed** to express its thanks for the sterling work undertaken with gypsy/traveller communities by Sandra Sutherland, as education support officer, on the occasion of her leaving the Council's employment.

12. CHILD PROTECTION

The Committee heard, and **noted** the content of, an oral presentation on child protection issues by Emma Toner (lead officer of Aberdeenshire Child Protection Committee), Margit Matthews (Practice Improvement Officer, Education and Children's Services) and Fiona Lovie (Team Manager (Children), Education and Children's Services).

Having thanked the officers concerned for their presentation, members raised a number of points and questions, after which the Committee **requested** the Director of Education and Children's Services to arrange a similar child protection presentation for all elected members.

13. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORKPLAN

With reference to 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 27 September, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided details of additional projects proposed for inclusion within the Workplan.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Education and Children's Services Supplementary Workplan, as contained within an appendix to the report,
- (2) **approved** the addition of the items on the Supplementary Workplan to the Directorate Workplan, as previously approved by the Committee on 1 February, 2018,
- (3) **noted** that the Education and Children's Services Committee was a lead policy committee for the proposed Water at Work contract and **agreed** to add that contract to the Infrastructure Services, Business Services, and Health and Social Care Workplans,
- (4) **agreed** not to reserve approval of the business case for the Water at Work contract, on the basis that the value was between £50,000 and £1 million, and
- (5) **approved** the business cases for Wrap Around Care services and Care at Home for Children, as contained within the appendices to the report.