

**ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL**

**EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 7 FEBRUARY, 2019**

**Present:** Councillor M Findlater (Vice-Chair), Mr D Bilsland, Mrs R Paterson and Mr D Smith (as substitute for Mrs A Guy), and Councillors N Baillie (as substitute for Councillor V Harper), R Bruce, C Buchan, S Dickinson, A Evison, A Fakley, M Ford, M Ingleby, R McKail, A Simpson, A Stirling (as substitute for Councillor G Owen), J Whyte and L Wilson.

**Apologies:** Dr A Barclay and Mrs A Guy, and Councillors V Harper and G Owen.

**Officers:** Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Resources and Performance, Head of Education, Interim Head of Children's Services, Accountancy Finance Manager, Legal Services Manager (Governance), Lead Officer (Primary Education) and Senior Committee Officer (Allan Bell).

**CHAIR**

In the absence of Councillor Owen, Councillor Findlater, as Vice-Chair, presided over the meeting.

**DR AILEEN BARCLAY**

The Chair indicated that Dr Aileen Barclay had been appointed as the Church of Scotland representative on the Committee, replacing Dr Eleanor Anderson, although Dr Barclay was not present on this occasion.

**MARIA WALKER**

The Chair advised members that the Council's former Director of Education and Children's Services, Maria Walker, had been awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List and congratulated her on behalf of the Committee.

**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. No interests were declared.

**2. 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 to take those into consideration when reaching a decision.

### **3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 6 DECEMBER, 2018**

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 6 December, 2018, members **agreed** to amend the text to show that Councillor McKail had submitted his apologies.

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 in respect of actions arising at previous meetings,
- (2) **agreed** that those actions which had been completed should be removed from the outstanding actions list,
- (3) **requested** the Director of Education and Children's Services to set a date for the outstanding presentation on child protection matters, and
- (4) **noted** officers' assurances that consultation on the proposed Blairs rezoning was being progressed.

### **5. ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE IN ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS 2017/18**

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 4 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) provided details of the attendance and absence rates of Aberdeenshire pupils during school session 2017/2018, broken down by school sector and between authorised and unauthorised absences, and showing the comparative rates in Aberdeenshire as against those for the whole of Scotland, (2) supplied analysis of the attendances and absences of care-experienced young people and (3) outlined actions undertaken by Education and Children's Services.

Having **noted** the contents of the report, together with members' comments in respect of authorised holidays for pupils, attendance figures in Banff and Buchan, and care-experienced young people, the Committee **congratulated** pupils, parents, carers and staff on the continued high rates of attendance at schools in Aberdeenshire.

### **6. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021 - "LEARNING TOGETHER IN ABERDEENSHIRE"**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 11 October, 2018 (Item 9), when it had been agreed to consult with key stakeholders on the draft Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy 2018-2021 ("Learning Together in Aberdeenshire"), there was circulated a report dated 7 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the development of the Strategy, aimed at improving the quality and extent of parental involvement in children's learning, (2) which advised that detailed consultation had taken place, through the staging of a number of

events, together with the issuing of survey questionnaires and (3) to which were appended a copy of the draft Strategy, draft Parental Involvement and Engagement Action Plan, and Aberdeenshire Family Learning Delivery Plan.

After detailed consideration, and having **noted** members' comments and suggested amendments to the Strategy document, in respect of Additional Support for Learner events in each area, collaboration with other stakeholders, family learning, increasing attainment, parent councils and technology aimed at assisting those for whom English is not a first language, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the recommendations arising from the findings of the consultation on the draft Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy, as appended to the report,
- (2) **approved** the current version of the Strategy and Action Plan 2018-2021, as appended to the report,
- (3) **noted** and **approved** the Aberdeenshire Family Learning Delivery Plan appended to the report, and
- (4) **instructed** the Parental Engagement Support Hub Aberdeenshire (PESHA) team to submit a six-month implementation report to the Committee by October, 2019.

## 7. 2018-BASED SCHOOL ROLL FORECASTS

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 18 December, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained that school roll forecasts were published on an annual basis for all primary and secondary schools in Aberdeenshire and that the 2018-based forecasts had been discussed at each area committee during December, 2018, (2) which highlighted variations to forecast rolls, together with forecasts by geographical area, (3) which specified the schools currently operating at over 100% published capacity and those anticipated to have a roll in excess of published capacity in 5 years' time, and the approach that officers intended to take to address that situation and (4) to which were appended the projected levels of pupils for each school within Aberdeenshire to 2023 and a summary of placing requests received for each school.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the publication and circulation of the appendix to the report as the official Aberdeenshire 2018-based school roll forecasts, and
- (2) **noted** the revised capacities outlined within the report.

## 8. TEACHER STAFFING

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 24 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained the current position regarding teacher staffing in schools across Aberdeenshire, including recruitment initiatives deployed, the levels of retention of primary and secondary school probationer teachers, and the ratio of pupils to each teacher and (2) outlined strategies which the Service intended to utilise to assist with future recruitment and retention of school teachers.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the position in respect of teacher staffing across the Aberdeenshire Council area and actions taken to date, and

- (2) **agreed** to endorse the future development strategy, as detailed within the report.

## 9. FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 31 DECEMBER, 2018

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 8 February, 2018 (Item 4), when approval had been given to the draft Revenue Budget for financial year 2018/2019 and the Capital Plan 2018-2033, there was circulated a report dated 24 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) detailed the forecast outturn for the period to 31 December, 2018, for both the Revenue Budget and Capital Plan, (2) explained the current Revenue Budget monitoring position for the Council, with accompanying narrative detailing areas of risk and actions pursued to address those risks and (3) set out the current position in respect of expected expenditure and income in projects contained within the Education and Children's Services part of the Council's non-Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Budget, as revised .

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Revenue and Capital Budget monitoring position, as at 31 December, 2018, and
- (2) **noted** the Revenue Budget virements, as set out within an appendix to the report.

## 10. ANNUAL PROCUREMENT REPORT 2018

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Business Services Committee of 15 November, 2018 (Item 7), when approval had been given to the Annual Procurement Report 2017/18 and it had been agreed that the report should be referred to other policy committees for information and discussion, there was circulated a report dated 17 January, 2019, by the Director of Business Services (1) which explained that the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 required each Scottish local authority to publish its procurement strategy and to notify Scottish Ministers accordingly, (2) which advised that the Council's procurement function was shared with Aberdeen City Council and Highland Council, aimed at ensuring value for money and contributing to the achievement of the authority's broader aims and objectives, (3) which highlighted the priorities of the joint Procurement Strategy, together with the financial efficiencies achieved and (4) to which was appended a copy of the Council's Annual Procurement Report for the period between 1 January, 2017 and 31 March, 2018.

Having **noted** the contents of the report, together with members' comments regarding the level of financial efficiency savings, the gender pay gap, fair working practices, accessibility issues and local suppliers, the Committee **instructed** officers to arrange a workshop event on procurement matters for members of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

## 11. MEMBER PROMOTED ISSUE – COUNCIL ACTIONS TO HELP CHILDREN GROW UP WITH NATURE

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 21 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which provided details of a Member Promoted Issue (MPI) submitted by Councillor Ford relating to Council actions aimed at help children grow up with nature and (2) to which was appended a paper entitled "Why Educating Children about the Natural World Matters", together with the original MPI submission.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Member Promoted Issue appended to the report,

- (2) **noted** the report entitled “Why Educating Children about the Natural World Matters”, appended to the report, and
- (3) **requested** officers to make a presentation to members on work currently being done in schools, in this regard.

DRAFT

