

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 30 MAY, 2019

Present: Councillors G Owen (Chair) and M Findlater (Vice-Chair), Dr A Barclay, Mr D Bilsland and Mrs A Guy, and Councillors K Adam, R Bruce, C Buchan, S Dickinson, A Evison, A Fakley, M Ford, V Harper, M Ingleby, R McKail, A Simpson and J Whyte.

Apology: Mrs R Paterson.

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

"CAREER READY" SCHEME

The Committee was addressed by Abbie Welsh from Meldrum Academy, the "Career Ready" student of the year, after which the Chair congratulated Abbie on her achievement, thanked all the mentors involved for their contribution to the programme and encouraged other businesses to support the venture in future.

JOHN BYRNE DRAWING COMPETITION

The Committee congratulated Alisa Lippe of Largue School and Jack Esslemont of Aboyne Primary School on finishing first and second respectively in a national drawing competition, supported by Education Scotland.

MRS ADRIENNE GUY

On the occasion of her final Education and Children's Services Committee meeting as the appointed primary school teaching representative, the Chair thanked Adrienne Guy for her service on, and contribution to the work 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.

Councillor Evison declared an interest in respect of Items 7 and 16, both by virtue of being Chair of the Improvement Service Board. She left the meeting during consideration of Item 16, but remained and took part in Item 7, as she considered that interest to be remote and insignificant. Councillor Buchan declared an interest in respect of Item 16, on account of having been involved in setting up the Scholar programme but, having applied the objective test, had concluded that the interest was remote and insignificant, and advised that he would remain and take part 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 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.

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 items below so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the undernoted paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No	Paragraph No of Schedule 7A
16	8
17	3

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 21 MARCH, 2019

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 21 March, 2019, members **agreed** to amend the last paragraph of Item 17 to include the word "existing" before "credit unions" and the words "basic income" in the list of subject items.

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) **agreed** that the outstanding report on the Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy Implementation Plan should be submitted to a meeting of the Committee by December, 2019, and
- (4) **noted** that the home education policy and guidance was currently being updated by Legal Services, after consultation with officers from Education and Children's Services, prior to being brought to a future meeting of the Committee for consideration.

5. ADOPTION SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

There was circulated and **noted** a report dated 22 April, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) contained the 2018 annual report for the Council's

Adoption Service, outlining progress made in the last year in meeting the needs of Aberdeenshire's children who require an alternative permanent family and (2) highlighted the functions of the Adoption Service.

Having **noted** members' comments in respect of Linkmaker (Scotland's Adoption Register Online Linking facility), the identification of adoptive children by gender, the impact of legal processes on prospective adopters, the average length of the adoption process, adoption by step-parents, and the post-adoption "letterbox" scheme which facilitated prospective contact between adopted children, adoptive parents and birth parents, the Committee **agreed** to support the ongoing recruitment of adopters across Aberdeenshire.

6. FOSTERING SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT

There was circulated and **noted** a report dated 22 April, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which highlighted the functions of the Council's Fostering Service in recruiting, preparing and supporting families to meet the needs of Aberdeenshire's children who require to be looked after away from home in an alternative family arrangement and (2) to which was appended a copy of the Service's annual report for 2018.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** members' comments on continuing care for young people over 18, the varying criteria applied by different fostering agencies, the impact and financial implications of further education on foster children, the link between fostering delays and adoption, and recognition of the different compositions of families, and
- (2) **agreed** to support the ongoing recruitment of foster carers across Aberdeenshire.

7. LOCAL GOVERNMENT BENCHMARKING FRAMEWORK THEMATIC REPORT 2018 – CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

There was circulated and **noted** a report dated 24 April, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) advised that all Scottish local authorities had been working with the Improvement Service to develop a common approach to the benchmarking of services provided to local communities, in the form of the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), (2) explained that the LGBF had published its first thematic report relating to Children and Young People's Services, drawing on key framework indicators captured between 2010/11 and 2016/17, and highlighting local government priorities and how the system is performing and (3) provided comparative data for Aberdeenshire Council and across Scotland, in respect of expenditure on Children and Young People's Services, the performance of Children's Services, key trends in children and young peoples' outcomes, and data relating to care experienced young people.

After discussion, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the local context of the thematic report, in terms of improving children and young peoples' outcomes in Aberdeenshire, and
- (2) **noted** comments provided by members regarding the level of exclusions amongst care experienced young people, the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, the impact of museums and libraries on the education of young people, community and residential provision for looked after children, changes in the pattern of spend per pupil, exclusion and absence rates for children with additional support needs, and the positive impact of the 1140 early learning and child care initiative.

8. LETTING FEES AND CHARGES 2019/20

ITEM WITHDRAWN.

9. REVIEW OF INVERURIE PRIMARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 30 August, 2018 (Item 9), when it had been agreed to approve the launch of informal engagement regarding the catchment areas for primary schools within Inverurie and for Inverurie Academy, and to receive future reports regarding progress, there was circulated a report dated 14 May, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the provision of primary school education within Inverurie, together with consultations which had taken place thereon and (2) to which was appended a detailed consultation proposal document.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **agreed** to authorise a statutory consultation with local stakeholders (parent councils, parents, pupils, staff and local communities), in respect of the Inverurie primary schools cluster, between 5 June and 6 September, 2019, concentrating on, in particular, the catchment areas of Kellands School, Strathburn School and Uryside School, and
- (2) **instructed** officers to submit a further report on the outcome of the consultation to the meeting of the Committee in December, 2019.

10. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT 2018/19

With reference to the Minutes of Meetings of (1) Aberdeenshire Council of 23 November, 2017 (Item 10), when approval had been given to the Council Plan 2017 to 2022 and (2) the Committee of (a) 17 May, 2018 (Item 7), when members had agreed the Council Plan priorities for scrutiny and (b) 21 March, 2019 (Item 18), when the Director of Education and Children's Services had been requested to submit the performance report for 2018/2019 to the Committee no later than the meeting of 29 August, 2019, there was circulated a report dated 29 April, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided an update on the outcome indicators identified to help demonstrate how the Council was working within the framework and the service progressing, as evidenced through the performance achieved during the reporting period of April, 2018 to March, 2019.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the performance achieved during 2018/19, as detailed within the outcome indicators in the report,
- (2) **noted** the publication of the full 2018/19 outcome indicator update detail report on Ward Pages,
- (3) **noted** the measures to be scrutinised by other policy committees, and to which Education and Children's Services would also contribute, as outlined within the report,
- (4) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to continue to submit performance reports to the Committee on a six-monthly basis, evidencing progress and performance with delivery of the Council Plan 2017-2022, and

- (5) **requested** officers to arrange a workshop session for Committee members on HMIE (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education) reports and school inspections

11. STRACHAN SCHOOL UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 17 May, 2018 (Item 5), when members had approved the preparation of an Options Appraisal on the future of Strachan School, there was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that a number of engagement sessions had been held with the Strachan community since September, 2018, to gather views as part of the Options Appraisal process, (2) advised that no pupils had enrolled at Strachan School for 2019/20 and, therefore, it would be necessary for the school to remain "mothballed" for the coming session, (3) indicated options for the future use of the school and (4) intimated that a further report on the school would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee in August, 2019.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the content of the Options Appraisal for Strachan School, as appended to the report, and
- (2) **acknowledged** the deadline of 14 June, 2019, for further community suggestions regarding the future of Strachan School.

12. MEMBER PROMOTED ISSUE – PROMOTING AND IMPROVING RECYCLING AND COMPOSTING RATES IN ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 8 May, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which explained that, in terms of the Scheme of Governance, a Member Promoted Issue (MPI), "Promoting and Improving Recycling and Composting Rates in Aberdeenshire Schools", had been submitted by Councillor Martin Ford and that, in response, officers had prepared a paper addressing the matter. Councillor Ford spoke to his MPI, after which detailed discussion took place among members.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the report on "Promoting and Improving Recycling and Composting Rates in Aberdeenshire Schools", as appended to the report, and
- (2) **requested** officers to submit a report to a future meeting of the Committee (a) with an implementation plan including performance indicators to improve recycling across the learning estate in a sustainable way, (b) with proposals for amending budgetary responsibilities, in order to incentivise schools to reduce the costs of waste disposal, (c) including information on items which were procured for use within schools and (d) proposing ways in which cleaning and facilities staff might be encouraged to ensure that separation of waste for recycling continued through until collections were made from schools.

13. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES POLICY

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of 19 September, 2013 (Item 18), there was circulated and **approved** a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, to which was appended the updated corporate policy for the administration and management of school excursions involving adventurous activities.

14. ABERDEENSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT NETWORK REVIEW MEMBER/OFFICER WORKING GROUP - EXPANSION OF MEMBERSHIP

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee of 15 March, 2018 (Item 9), when it had been agreed to establish a member/officer working group to oversee a proposed review of the passenger transport network, there was circulated a report dated 15 May, 2019, by the Director of Infrastructure Services, which (1) explained the background to the operation of the working group, including its original objectives, (2) detailed the work undertaken by the working group and (3) advised that the working group had concluded that its membership should be expanded to include representation from the Education and Children's Services Committee and the Integration Joint Board, given the wider impact supported bus services have on both travel to school, and social inclusion and health care.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the work undertaken to date by the Passenger Transport Network Review Member/Officer Working Group,
- (2) **agreed** to nominate Councillor Owen to be a member of the Working Group up to May, 2020, and
- (3) **requested** officers to submit regular update reports to the Committee on the work of the Group.

15. OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PATTERN OF SCHOOL TERM DATES, HOLIDAYS AND IN-SERVICE CLOSURE DATES FROM SESSION 2020/21 TO 2024/25

There was circulated a report dated 10 May, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which advised that responses had been received to a consultation on holidays and term dates for the sessions between 2020/21 and 2024/25, (2) which highlighted the factors taken into account in determining the pattern of relevant dates, (3) which provided a detailed analysis of the responses received to the consultation questionnaire and (4) to which was appended the consultation document, together with the originally-proposed dates for school term, holidays and in-service closures.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the responses received to the recent consultation on term dates, and
- (2) **approved** the proposed pattern of term dates, school holidays and in-service closures for the five sessions from 2020/21.

16. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES SUPPLEMENTARY WORK PLAN

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 21 March, 2019 (Item 21), when approval had been given to the Annual Directorate Work Plan for Education and Children's Services for financial year 2019/20, there was circulated a report dated 30 April, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided details of additional projects proposed for inclusion within the Work Plan.

After consideration, the Committee:-

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

- (2) **approved** the addition of the items to the Directorate Work Plan, as detailed within the report,
- (3) **approved** the business cases contained within the appendices to the report, and
- (4) **agreed** not to reserve approval of the business case for the Scholar contract.

17. SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING OF 18 MARCH, 2019

There was circulated a report dated 27 March, 2019, by the Director of Business Services, which contained information relating to the decision of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee (SWCRC) at its meeting of 18 March, 2019.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Minute of Meeting of the SWCRC of 18 March, 2019, as appended to the report,
- (2) **noted** the decision of the SWCRC not to uphold the complaint in question,
- (3) **noted** the recommendation from the SWCRC to the Social Work Service to consider creating an audit process for recording events, explaining the reasons why interviews might be cut short, providing service users with a narrative of what had taken place, and ensuring the sharing, in print, of relevant meeting content, and
- (4) **noted** the response thereto from the Head of Children's Services, as detailed within the report.