

## ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

### EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

#### SKYPE MEETING, 18 MARCH, 2021

**Present:** Councillors G Owen (Chair), R Bruce (Vice Chair), K Adam, D Beagrie, C Buchan, S Dickinson, A Evison, M Ford (for the agenda Items 1-13), J Gifford, M Ingleby, L McAllister, R McKail, A Simpson, L Wilson, Ms C Eade and Mr A Sutcliffe (as substitute for Mr D Bilsland).

**Apologies:** Mr D Bilsland, Mrs Paterson

**Officers:** Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Children's Services, Interim Head of Resources and Performance, Head of Education, Head of Commercial & Procurement, Team Manager (Resources and Performance), Quality Improvement Manager (Resources and Performance), Estates Programme Manager (Resources and Performance), Learning Estates Officer (Resources and Performance), Business Support & Performance Manager (Support Services), Opportunities for All Officer (Community Learning & Development), Service Manager (Lifelong Learning & Leisure), Senior CLS Worker (Lifelong Learning & Leisure), Education Support Officer (Support Services), Developing the Young Workforce Lead Officer (Education), Buchan Area Manager, Tackling Poverty & Inequalities Co-ordinator, Principal Solicitor (Legal & People), and Committee Officer (Kasia Balina).

#### INTRODUCTION

The Chair paid tribute to all staff from the Education and Children's Services for their efforts in maintaining the safe return of pupils to the school buildings after the recent Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, as well as continuing to support those learning remotely. The Committee expressed particular appreciation for the support staff working on secondary schools' timetables based on two meters social distancing.

The Committee also commended the session with the Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, Youth Councillors and the Pupil Participation Forum.

#### 1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

Councillor A Evison declared an interest in agenda Item 21 by virtue of being a Chair of Improvement Service. Councillor Evison concluded that having applied the objective test, the interest was significant, and therefore would leave the meeting during consideration of that item.

Councillor A Simpson declared an interest in agenda Item 6 by virtue of being a Board Member of the North-East Scotland College. Councillor Simpson concluded that

having applied the objective test, the interest was remote and insignificant, and she would remain and participate when the item was being considered.

## 2. RESOLUTIONS

### 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 and 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.

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

**Item No**  
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**Paragraph No of Schedule 7A**  
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### 3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF 28 JANUARY, 2021

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 28 January, 2021, Members **agreed** to approve it as a correct record.

### 4. PROGRESS WITH OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which updated Members on progress with actions agreed at previous meetings of the Education and Children's Services Committee held since 29 August, 2019.

Thereafter, and having considered Members' comments on the Gypsy traveller budget, parental engagement in terms of the consultation process on the situation in the Gartly primary school, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the current position in respect of actions arising from previous meetings; and

- (2) that those actions which had been completed should be removed from the outstanding actions list.

## 5. COVID-19 VERBAL UPDATE

The Director of Education and Children's Services provided an update on steps taken within the Service to respond to the pandemic. It was highlighted that the vast amount of work had been focused on providing support to children and young people. Teacher representatives were asked to offer their insights and it was acknowledged that schools were managing well during this challenging time.

In terms of the Scottish Qualifications Agency (SQA) assessment update, it was confirmed that the consultation process was in progress and that two additional in-service days had been added, in line with the national guidance, to secondary school calendars for 3 and 4 of June to support the work staff are required to do to submit grades to the SQA.

The Committee discussed the importance of engaging directly with young people to ensure they felt supported; the session at Portlethen Academy with the Committee and young representatives from across Aberdeenshire had been cited as examples of best practice.

The Committee **noted** the ongoing response of the Service to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 6. LEARNING ESTATES STRATEGY

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 11 October, 2018 (Item 8), when approval had been given to the Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate, there was circulated a report dated 11 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided the revised Learning Estate Strategy in accordance with that produced in 2019 Scotland's Learning Estates Strategy, Connecting People, Places and Learning.

Thereafter, and having considered Members' comments regarding the free school transport and a privilege passes; capital projects funded from developer obligations with Area Committees involved in the consultation process; linkages between the learning estate and the carbon budget, good waste, catering and school transport with proposal to reword 2.7, point d from "a minimum number of new jobs" to "many new jobs"; the digital capability of the learning estate and the CO2 monitors being installed in the classrooms, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the Learning Estates Strategy as presented in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- (2) instruct officers to submit further update reports on catering facilities and food waste.

## 7. LEARNING ESTATES UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 21 March, 2021, when the Committee instructed officers to submit a further update report on progress to the meeting in March 2021, there was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) outlined the work of the Council's Learning Estates Team within Aberdeenshire and further afield, (2) highlighted the Service's priorities, (3) provided the School Roll Forecasts and Core Fact data, (4) provided details on the situation in Banchory Academy, Kemnay Academy and South Formartine, together with secondary and primary school enhancements at a number of other locations within Aberdeenshire, (5) had appended a detailed information on school roll forecasts produced for the session 2021/22, and (6) detailed the individual school gradings for Sustainability and Condition Core Facts.

Thereafter, and having considered Members' comments regarding the capacity in local schools, which would be discussed at the local levels, the Committee **agreed** to: -

- (1) acknowledge the progress regarding the continued development of the Learning Estate;
- (2) acknowledge the School Roll Forecasts, as presented in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (3) note the Core Fact submission to Scottish Government for 2020, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report;
- (4) receive a further report outlining work for 2021/22 in May 2021; and
- (5) instruct officers to submit further update reports on school rolls and school placing requests to future meetings.

## 8. SECONDARY SCHOOL S1 ADMISSION LIMITS AND RESERVED PLACES

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 19 March, 2021 (Item 8), when approval had been given to the secondary school admission limits for academic session 2020/2021, together with the number of reserved places for secondary schools, there was circulated a report dated 15 February, 2021, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that S1 admission limits for all Aberdeenshire secondary schools required to be reviewed regularly to assess the demand for in-zone places, (2) advised that any variations to limits required the approval of the Education and Children's Services Committee and (3) highlighted proposed changes to the admission limits to Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy, Banchory Academy, Banff Academy, Ellon Academy, Fraserburgh Academy, Kemnay Academy, Inverurie Community Campus, Mackie Academy, Mearns Academy, Meldrum Academy, Mintlaw Academy, Peterhead Academy, Portlethen Academy, Turriff Academy, and Westhill Academy.

After consideration, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) approve the Secondary School Admission Limits for school term 2021/22, as detailed within the report; and
- (2) approve the number of reserved places for Secondary Schools for school term 2021/22, as detailed within the report.

## **9. ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE IN ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS 2019/20**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 28 May, 2020 (Item 6), when consideration had been given to the attendance and absence rates of Aberdeenshire pupils during school session 2018/19, there was circulated a report dated 9 January, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) provided details of the attendance and absence rates of children and young people attending Aberdeenshire schools during the school session 2019/20 broken down by school sector, Council area and between the authorised and unauthorised absences, and showed the comparative rates in Aberdeenshire as against those for the whole Scotland, (2) provided additional attendance and absence rates relating to Covid-19, (3) presented analysis of the attendance and absences of care-experiences young people, and (4) outlined actions undertaken by the Education and Children's Services.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) note the contents of the report, together with Members' comments in respect of the absences related to the Covid-19; different levels of attendance across the six areas within Aberdeenshire; ongoing focus on mental health and wellbeing and support provided to children and young people; and
- (2) congratulated children and young people, their parents and carers and staff on the continued high levels of attendance in schools across Aberdeenshire.

## **10. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF INITIAL SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS 2019/20 AND OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINED DESTINATIONS DATA**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 19 March, 2020 (Item 10), when analysis of initial school leavers' destinations data 2018/19 had been considered by the Committee, there was circulated a report dated 3 March, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) provided a summary and analysis of the initial destinations of pupils leaving Aberdeenshire Schools in session 2019/20 and an update on those who had left during session 2018/2019, (2) stated that the economic and social effects of Covid-19 at the time young people had been leaving school had influenced decisions made about their post school destination, (3) provided information on follow-up destination of school leavers, together with range of support provided to young people leaving schools, and (4) had appended school leaver destinations by destination categories from 2017-2018 to 2019-2020, together with a detailed breakdown by secondary school of the higher and further education, employment, training and other destinations of leavers.

The Committee commented in respect of the decrease in the percentage of school leavers going on to a positive destination; increase in the percentage of 'unemployed and not seeking'; Care Experienced Young People (CEYP) moving into further education; funding available for key projects and initiatives; developing the Young Workforce curriculum and initiatives.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to: -

- (1) note the analysis of initial school leavers destinations presented within the report, which informed the Council's priority to improve life chances for young people; and
- (2) note the progress made in supporting young people post-school and beyond, in order to ensure sustained destinations.

## 11. TEACHER STAFFING

There was circulated a report dated 4 March, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided an annual update on current teaching staffing numbers and vacancies, actions taken to date to improve staffing numbers and other actions under consideration to improve the teacher staffing complement.

Thereafter, and having considered Members' comments regarding the situation in the area and the requirement to encourage teachers to travel to the schools located in the north; the number of temporary contracts and funding allocated to local authorities for additional staffing and the situation of newly qualified teachers, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the position with teacher staffing in the area and the actions taken to date; and
- (2) endorse the ongoing actions, as detailed within the report.

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

## 12. PRIMARY SCHOOL DESIGN BRIEF

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 30 January, 2020 (Item 6) when approval had been given to the Education and Children's Services' Accessibility Strategy and Accessibility Design Brief, there was circulated a report dated 15 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which set out key requirements relating to space standards and design in order to ensure consistency in Aberdeenshire school buildings using best practice. It was highlighted that the aspiration was for all schools to be fully inclusive and to make a positive impact as a result of changes to the school estate.

The Committee considered Members' comments regarding the use of schools by the wider community with facilities to be utilised as fully as possible beyond the school day; alternative solutions to loud electric hand dryers which may impact upon autistic children; pitches provided within the new schools; period poverty legislation and free

sanitary products; primary schools being more than neutral in terms of all protected characteristics and poverty attainment gap; support provided to parents in terms of tackling poverty issues; and family learning initiatives.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to approve the updated Primary School Design Brief attached as presented in Appendix 1 to the report.

### **13. CARBON BUDGET SIX-MONTHLY UPDATE**

With reference to the Minute of the Meeting of Aberdeenshire Council of 18 March 2020 (Item 10), when the Council agreed that Policy Committees and the Sustainability Committee should submit six-monthly Carbon Budget updates, there was circulated a report, dated 11 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) highlighted the proposed projects that had been identified for progression during 2021/22 in Live life Aberdeenshire and Education and Children's Services as presented in Appendix 1 to the report, (2) explained that the projects already identified in 2020/21 had not progressed as planned due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that had led to a shortfall in the expected carbon reduction, and (3) provided information on the development an Education and Children's Services' Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and a short, medium and long term action plan.

The Committee considered Members comments on links with local care homes; importance of projects delivered in cooperation with Landscape Services and Green Space Officers; lessons learned from pandemic in terms of attending the virtual meetings; community collaboration with schools with councillors included in consultation process.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) note the Education and Children's Services Carbon Budget six-monthly update, as presented in Appendix 1 to the report and the development of the Education and Children's Services Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy;
- (2) note the ongoing responsibility of each Director to secure their reduction targets as set out in the Carbon Budget, and to report progress at six-monthly to the relevant Policy Committees and to the Sustainability Committee; and
- (3) instruct officers to organise a workshop on all initiatives in this regard.

### **14. COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT THIRD SECTOR FUNDING**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 27 August, 2020 (Item 6) when approval had been given to grant funding for financial year 2020/21 of £58,150 to Aberdeen Foyer, £24,900 to WEA and £23,135.83 to Lead Scotland, in a total of £99,185.83, there was circulated a report dated 12 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which sought Committee agreement on the future allocation of Community Learning and Development (CLD) service core funding to third sector organisation to support CLD activity.

After detailed consideration, the Committee **agreed**: -

- (1) to approve the proposal to redirect core funding to support the development of community-led groups and to provide wider opportunities for access to CLD services at a local level; and
- (2) as the appropriate approach that CLD service would taper off payments to organisations receiving funding over the next two years, reducing by 50% of each grant per annum.

#### **15. ANALYSIS OF ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ABERDEENSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ACCREDITED AWARDS (2019-20)**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 19 March, 2020 (Item 14) when approval had been given to the new approach to reporting attainment and achievement, there was circulated a report dated 12 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) presented an analysis of school attainment based on the set of data arising from qualifications taken by young people in Aberdeenshire secondary schools during the 2019-20 school session and school leavers who left during session 2018-19, and (2) provided information on strategies which aimed to raise levels of attainment and to reduce the poverty related attainment gap across the whole of Aberdeenshire.

The Committee considered Members' comments on the role of National Progression Awards, as well as Foundation Apprenticeships, in supporting all young people to reach their potential.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to: -

- (1) acknowledge the contents of the report to further inform the Service's approaches to improving attainment levels across Aberdeenshire, as presented in paragraph 4.8 to the report; and
- (2) congratulate young people, their parents and carers, teachers and support staff and the wider children's services across Aberdeenshire on the level of success and achievement outlined within the report.

#### **16. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIPS IN ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS**

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 21 March, 2019 (Item 10), when Members had acknowledged the successful Aberdeenshire Council bid to become a lead provider for the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships (FA) in Aberdeenshire schools from August, 2019, and officers had been requested to provide annual updates to the Committee, there was circulated a report dated 17 February, 2021, by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) explained the background to the development of Foundation Apprenticeships in Aberdeenshire schools, (2) provided a detailed overview of Aberdeenshire Council and NESCOL Foundation Apprenticeships in session 2020-21, (3) provided information on the delivery models being employed, together with emerging practice

and plans for 2021-22 and (4) explained how the delivery of the FA programme had been significantly impacted upon by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Thereafter, and having considered Members' comments regarding the excellent Foundation Apprenticeships results in providing education, skills, knowledge and opportunities, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge progress made with the development of Foundation Apprenticeships in Aberdeenshire schools during session 2020-21;
- (2) acknowledge the successful bid by the Aberdeenshire Council to Skills Development Scotland to continue as a lead provider for the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships from August 2021; and
- (3) endorse the approaches to build capacity across the region in particular with the engagement of employers and advise on and inform our plans for employer engagement.

## **17. CORPORATE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020/21**

The Vice Chair, Councillor R Bruce, took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Audit Committee of 17 September 2020 (Item 8), when the Committee agreed to approve the Annual Governance Statement Action Plan and to receive quarterly progress reports on the Annual Governance Statement, there was circulated a report dated 11 February, 2021 by the Director of Business Services which asked the Committee to note and provide comments on the Corporate Improvement Plan, specifically those actions within the remit of the Committee. Members were also informed that Education and Children's Services' own improvement plan will also be brought back to the Committee at a later date, looking in more detail at performance and progress within various areas of work.

The Committee **agreed** to: -

- (1) note the Corporate Improvement Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, which had been presented to Audit Committee on 4 February 2021; and
- (2) receive quarterly updates for monitoring and scrutiny.

## **18. POLICY REGISTER ANNUAL REPORTING**

There had been circulated a report dated 9 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services which detailed the current position on policies that were delegated to the Education and Children's Services Committee and sought approval for the proposed timescales for policies that had expired, as well as those that were approaching their review date to be brought to future committees. The report explained that policies had been categorised using a traffic light system to indicate readiness for review as categorised in Section 4.3 of the report with Red indicating a review was required, Amber for monitoring and Green, no action was required.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to acknowledge the policies delegated to Education and Children's Services Committee that had been reviewed during 2020; and
- (2) the proposed plans for review for those policies that had expired as well as those that are approaching their review date as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, to be considered at future committees.

## **19. TACKLING POVERTY & INEQUALITIES – PROGRESS REPORT**

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 12 February, 2021 by the Director of Business Services Committee which provided an update on progress made covering the work of the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Strategic Partnership Group, including the actions within the Child Poverty Action Plan and the delivery plan supporting the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority 'Reducing Poverty'.

The Committee **agreed** to provide the following comments on the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Progress Report to the Communities Committee, which would inform the final Local Child Poverty Action Report:-

- (1) circumstances had changed and the services provided to the communities should be considered in the context of the Covid-19;
- (2) more local initiatives should be included within the report.

In terms of specific local concerns, which the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group should consider as part of the development of future plans, the following comments to be submitted:-

- (1) thank the Buchan Area Manager for an informative presentation and Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Team for their work;
- (2) suggested that access to affordable credits should be prioritised;
- (3) officers to look at more detail on how to help people suffering from long term Covid-19 situation;
- (4) recovery from Covid-19 needs to be trauma-informed to protect people's mental health;
- (5) emphasis on work to reduce stigma around poverty and inequality;
- (6) suggested that further consideration should be given to the support provided to parents/carers of children entitled to free school meals while unable to attend school for various reasons;
- (7) children and young people need to feel supported in order to attain and succeed also during the summer and other school breaks;

- (8) the Lived Experience Forum to strengthen the voice of children and young people and this area of work should be expanded;
- (9) there is significant hidden poverty across Aberdeenshire.

## **20. THE USE OF DELEGATED POWERS BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES BY REASON OF SPECIAL URGENCY**

There was circulated report dated 15 February, 2021 by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which explained the background of the use of delegated powers by reason of special urgency in respect of the delivery of "Raising Attainment" Foundation Apprenticeship pilots.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) acknowledge the successful Aberdeenshire Council bid to Skills Development Scotland to become a lead provider for the delivery of "Raising Attainment" (RA) pilots during the calendar year of 2021; and
- (2) acknowledge the use by the Director of Education and Children's Services of delegated powers, as detailed in the appendix to the report, in order to engage external providers to deliver Raising Attainment pilot courses in schools, where required.

## **21. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIRECTORATE PROCUREMENT WORK PLAN**

There was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services which (1) advised that the Scheme of Governance provided that Committee approval was required for expenditure of £50,000 or more on the purchase of goods, works and services from external suppliers via the Procurement Plan, as the first stage of the procurement approval process and (2) had appended the Education and Children's Services Supplementary Procurement Plan 2020/21, and the business cases (Procurement Approval Forms) for a number of items proposed for inclusion within the Plan.

After consideration, the Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) approve the items on the Procurement Plan appended to the report;
- (2) reserve approval of the Procurement Approval Form for any item on the Procurement Plan where the value of the matter was up to £1,000,000;
- (3) the Procurement Approval Forms as detailed in Appendices 2-5 to the report;
- (4) reserve the award of the contract for any item with a contract value that exceeds £1,000,000; and

- (5) acknowledge that the Director of Education and Children's Services had the delegated authority to award the final contracts of the items with a contract value up to £1,000,000 and those items with a contract value that exceeds £1,000,000 where the committee had not reserved the right to award the final contract.

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