

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 31 AUGUST, 2017

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

Apologies: Councillor M Buchan and Ms A Guy.

Officers: Director of Education and Children's Services, Head of Primary and Curriculum Development, Head of Secondary and Additional Support, Head of Resources and Performance, Head of Lifelong Learning and Leisure, Head of Children's Services, Lead Officer Primary Education, Chief Accountant, Principal Solicitor, Governance (Mrs L Cowie) and Principal Committee Services Officer (Mrs Riddell).

1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

The Chair asked members if they had any interests to declare in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Councillor Evison declared an interest in Item 8 as one of the Council's Champions in respect of looked after children and as an attendee at Champions Board meetings and would remain and participate in the meeting for this item.

2. RESOLUTIONS

A. 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.

B. 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 3 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. CONTRACT AWARD FOR LIBRARY BOOKS AND E-MATERIALS

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Vacation Committee of 28 July 2017 (Item 4), when it had been agreed to approve the addition of the contract for the supply of library books and e-materials to the Education and Children's Services Directorate Work Plan, approve the Business Case for the procurement of the goods and reserve approval of the award report to the Education and Children's Services Committee, there was circulated a report dated 17 August 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services seeking authority to participate in the Framework Agreement managed by Scotland Excel for the provision of library books and e-materials.

The Committee **agreed** to:-

- (1) note the referral from the Vacation Committee regarding the award of contract;
- (2) the use of the Scotland Excel Framework Agreement for the procurement of Library Books and E-Materials for Culture & Sport Library Services; and
- (3) note that call off contracts under the terms of the Framework would be awarded by the Chief Officer in accordance with Financial Regulations.

4. THE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE SCOTLAND 2017/18 ACTION PLAN

There was circulated a report dated 21 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services seeking approval of the Council's response to the Scottish Government's *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland 2017/2018 Action Plan*, a commitment to increase the provision of free early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds by 2020. The report set out how Aberdeenshire Council would ensure that high quality ELC was available for families and learners including the development of detailed local service delivery action plans for each school cluster by January 2018.

Discussion took place on consultation with staff; links with and potential impact on third sector, social enterprise, childminders and other partner organisations; additional training requirements; options for mixed model service delivery and on a series of workshops planned.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to approve Aberdeenshire Council's response to the Scottish Government's *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland 2017/18 Action Plan* as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (2) that the Director of Education and Children's Services arrange an away day for Members of the Committee to include a workshop on progress in implementation of the Action Plan.

5. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 14 JUNE, 2017

The Minute of Meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee of 14 June, 2017, had been circulated, was **approved** as a correct record, and thereafter signed by the Chair.

6. NOTICE OF MOTION BY COUNCILLOR EVISON

From Councillor Evison:-

“Committee notes that in June 2017 the EIS passed a motion to campaign for free sanitary products to be made available for pupils and students in all schools, colleges and universities. Further, Committee notes that 99% of the Scottish Youth Parliament’s members believe that access to menstrual hygiene products is a basic human right. Committee welcomes the fact that Aberdeenshire schools generally hold supplies of sanitary and other personal hygiene products for pupils who ask for them. Committee requests that consideration is given to making these products more readily and easily available to pupils in need of them.”

Councillor Evison spoke to her motion which was seconded by Councillor Harper.

After discussion, the Committee **agreed** that the Director report on current practice within schools and identifying options available to provide ready and easy access to sanitary products in both primary and secondary schools.

7. FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 30 JUNE 2017

A report dated 16 August 2017 by the Director of Education and Children’s Services had been circulated containing financial monitoring information for Education and Children’s Services for the period to 30 June 2017 for both revenue and capital budget excluding the budgets for Visitor Attractions, Active Aberdeenshire, Sports and Leisure Management Client and Sports and Leisure Management contractor which would instead be reported separately to the Infrastructure Services and Communities Committees respectively based on their remits. The report advised that the forecast revenue expenditure was over budget; highlighted significant budget pressure areas; set out action being taken by officers to address the projected overspend; and sought approval of a number of budget virements as set out in Appendix 3 of the report.

During discussion Members asked about current vacancies and the potential impact of filling those vacancies on the teachers’ budget, the process for determining requirements for out of authority placements, the redirection of funding to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the virement of funds to other budgets and how those funds would be utilised, the permanent transfer of budgets relating to repairs and maintenance and those projects which would not be progressed as quickly as anticipated.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the revenue and capital budget monitoring as at 30 June 2017;
- (2) to approve the virements set out in Appendix 3 and note the revenue budget adjustments, some of which would be reported to Full Council for approval;
- (3) that the Head of Resources & Performance provide a briefing note to Members on the budget transfers in terms of how those funds would be utilised, how the service would be delivered and the associated risks,
- (4) that the Director of Education and Children’s Services report further on how the Service is addressing mental health issues in schools and across Aberdeenshire, and
- (5) that the Head of Resources & Performance update Ward Members on the revised timescale for delivery of those projects included in the Work Plan which had encountered delays.

8. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

There had been circulated a report dated 22 May, 2017, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, introducing the Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) Annual Report 2016/17. The report showed a service which was performing well in most of the key areas and advised that there were no specific areas which required additional scrutiny and planning beyond the routine Service and Council performance management processes. In those areas where improvement was required, timely and effective remedial measures had been put in place. The Chief Social Work Officer then spoke to his report.

During discussion, Members asked questions about workforce issues around recruitment and retention of staff, impact of Self Directed Support, changes to governance in terms of integrated services, partnership working, increase in numbers of mental health officers and opportunities to provide easier access to information on mental health services available.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the CSWO Annual Report for the 2016/2017 financial year;
- (2) to acknowledge the level of investment by the Council in Social Work Services for the residents of Aberdeenshire;
- (3) to acknowledge the commitment of social work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services; and
- (4) that the Chief Social Work Officer provide a Briefing Note to Members on the current position with the delivery of the My Life Dynamic Project

9. REVIEW OF ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL'S PROVISION FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING

There had been circulated a report dated 26 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services outlining a programme of work to review the structures, systems and services for providing Additional Support for Learning in schools and communities. The report advised that the review would include ongoing and planned review activity and would document and disseminate best practice within Aberdeenshire and across the Northern Alliance with a view to driving improvement activity through a strategic plan aligned to the Education and Children's Service Plan 2018 – 2020.

During discussion Members asked questions on arrangements for consultation with parents, staff and unions; any potential impact on the allocation of Pupil Support Assistant posts, provisions for dispute resolution, training and development opportunities and on the use of Inspection review outcomes in the review process.

Thereafter, the Committee **agreed** to approve the programme of work to review the provision of Additional Support for Learning in Aberdeenshire, as outlined in Appendix A of the report.

10. ABERDEENSHIRE SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS – INITIAL ANALYSIS

There had been circulated a report dated 4 August, 2017, by the Director of Education and Children's Services providing an initial analysis of attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examination results in Aberdeenshire schools for the year ending June 2017. The report stated that the data was 'raw' data from SQA which allowed limited analysis at school level. There were notable successes in overall performance at stages S4, S5 and S6 across a range of measures including increased attainment at 5+ at level 6 in S5 compared to 2016 and the performance of special schools had been very strong with significant progress made in ensuring that special school Senior Phase pupils could access the full National Qualification framework.

During discussion, members commented on the overall improving performance and noted that information on attainment levels relating to the additional range of qualifications accredited by bodies other than the SQA would be included in the follow up report.

The Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note the performance of Aberdeenshire academies in the national SQA diet of examinations in 2017 based on 'raw' SQA data and that the full INSIGHT analysis would be available in early September;
- (2) to acknowledge the excellent levels of improvement in measures across, S4, S5 and S6 and the hard work of pupils, parents and school staff in achieving these results; and
- (3) to approve the areas of continued focus to ensure the level of improvement is maintained year on year.

11. ABERDEENSHIRE IMPLEMENTATION OF STATUTORY GUIDANCE ON GAELIC EDUCATION

A report dated 20 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services had been circulated advising (a) on arrangements for the provision and promotion of Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education as required by the Education (Scotland) Act 2016, (b) that the requirement to provide Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) came in to force on 1 February 2017 and since that date no enquiries requesting an assessment of need for GMPE had been received, (c) that there were currently seven learners living in Aberdeenshire accessing Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Aberdeen City for which transport costs were being met, and (d) that information had been published on the Council's website providing clear guidance to parents on the process for requesting GME and that printed materials would soon be available in libraries and schools.

Following discussion on further opportunities to promote the availability of GME and to provide assistance to parents completing the necessary application, the Committee **agreed:-**

- (1) to note action taken to date to deliver and promote access to GME;
- (2) to approve the proposals contained in the report to ensure that the legislative requirements relating to the provision and promotion of Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education are met; and
- (3) that the Director consider further opportunities to ensure parents are aware of the application process.

12. STRACHAN PRIMARY SCHOOL

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of 3 December, 2015 (Item 9, Page 986) when it had been agreed not to continue with a previous decision to mothball Strachan Primary School following a parental request, there was circulated a report dated 12 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services advising that in June 2017 the school roll had been anticipated to fall to zero pupils as a result of pupils moving on to secondary education and parental placings for a local primary school and a decision had been taken by officers to mothball Strachan Primary School.

At this stage in the proceedings, the Committee unanimously agreed to suspend Standing Order 2.1.2 to allow the meeting to continue beyond 1pm.

Following discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the mothballing of Strachan Primary School; and
- (2) that the Director of Education & Children's Services provide an update report to the Education and Children's Services Committee when required.

13. NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 27 October 2017 (Item 5) when the Council's approach to delivering the Scottish Government's "*Delivering Excellence and Equity in Scottish Education*" plan had been approved, there had been circulated a report dated 14 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services on the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and the new duty for Authorities from August 2017 when taking strategic decisions to have 'due regard' as to how they will help to address disparity of educational outcomes which exist between the most and least disadvantaged and at the same time raise attainment for all. The report contained a NIF work plan which the Authority was required to produce annually outlining its key actions to address the excellence and equity agenda.

The Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to approve the Aberdeenshire National Improvement Framework (NIF) Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (2) that the Director of Education and Children's Services
 - (a) provide an update report to Committee in December 2017 to include detailed information on parental involvement; and
 - (b) arrange for a summary report on the National Improvement Framework Plan to be circulated to Area Committees for information.

14. ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS PIPE BANDS

On a circulated report dated 21 July 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services recommending that two school pipe bands be established by the Instrumental Music Service and seeking approval for the use of a hunting version of the existing Aberdeenshire Council tartan for band uniforms, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to approve the establishment and naming of two new schools pipe bands as follows –

- (a) the Provost of Aberdeenshire Schools Pipe Band, a performance band whose purpose would be to support civic events across Aberdeenshire; and
 - (b) the Aberdeenshire Schools Pipe Band, a competition band providing the opportunity to participate in local and national competitions;
- (2) to endorse the use of the hunting version of the Aberdeenshire Council tartan to be used in band uniforms, the cost of which to be met from within existing budgets.

15. SCRUTINY REFERRAL FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE – GLOW

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Audit Committee of 21 June 2017 (Item 14) there was circulated a report dated 17 August 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services Committee on a referral from the Audit Committee relating to a matter of service delivery identified for improvement in an Audit report, being increased use of technology in schools by means of a focused ICT strategy to enhance learning and teaching ensuring best value is achieved. The referral proposed that the Education and Children's Services Committee seek further reassurance from the Service in the form of a Stage 1 scrutiny report, as provided for in Part 4A of the Scheme of Governance, on whether the GLOW software was a suitable alternative and more cost effective solution to the Show My Homework software and determine any action to be taken as a result of the scrutiny activity.

The report set out the remit of the Audit Committee in terms of scrutiny of service delivery and the three stage committee review process for scrutiny within Aberdeenshire. The report also contained detailed information on technologies available within schools, including associated educational benefits and statistical information on usage.

Following discussion on the range of technologies available and the need for detailed feedback from users to determine the most suitable solution, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the detailed information provided in the circulated report,
- (2) to conduct the Committee Review process in respect of the service delivery matter identified by the Audit Committee,
- (3) to seek further reassurance in the form of a Stage 1 Scrutiny report by the Director of Education and Children's Services to be presented to the December 2017 meeting of the Committee and that the report provide detailed feedback from users of GLOW,
- (4) that the Director of Education and Children's Services arrange an Away-Day for Members of the Committee to incorporate learning through technology so that Members can become familiar with all methods that are used by the Service and to see all web-based interfaces that support learning for young people and to invite Members of the Audit Committee to attend, and
- (5) that the Head of Resources & Performance report to the Audit Committee on 21 September 2017 with the Committee's decision.

16. PRIMARY CURRICULUM – MANAGING NON-CLASS CONTACT TIME

A report dated 21 August 2017 by the Director of Education and Children's Services had been circulated on a review of the deployment and management of Visiting Specialist Teaching (VST) staff with the aim of all teaching staff provision including cover for non-class contact time being managed within each school's staffing complement. The report advised that there would be no reduction in teacher numbers, simply a change in the way in which

teaching staff were deployed and managed. The report also outlined the ongoing engagement programme with VSTs and the provision of access to professional development to ensure a successful transition.

Following a full discussion, the Committee **agreed**:-

- (1) to note the requirement to ensure services are relevant in the context of curriculum delivery and the emerging expectations of devolved responsibilities to Head Teachers; and
- (2) that the Director of Education and Children's Services provide a progress report to the December meeting of the Committee on how the skills of Visiting Specialist Teaching staff will be used in future.