

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 6 DECEMBER, 2018

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

Apologies: Dr E Anderson and Councillors M Buchan and R McKail.

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

"THE INTELLIGENT CLIENT"

Members viewed a video entitled "The Intelligent Client", on the Council's programme of new-build schools.

NEW DEER PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Chair advised members that pupils at New Deer Primary School had won a national award for accelerated reading and that she intended to write to the school, on the Committee's behalf, expressing its congratulations.

DR ELEANOR ANDERSON

Members heard that Dr Eleanor Anderson had indicated her intention to resign as the Church of Scotland representative on the Committee. The Chair thanked Dr Anderson for her long and dedicated service to the cause of education, and expressed the Committee's best wishes for the future.

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 Item 7, as President of COSLA, but, having applied the objective test, had concluded that the interest was not clear and substantial, and that she would remain and take part in the item in question.

Councillor Bruce stated that she had a connection to Item 8, on the basis that her spouse was involved with charities for the deaf and the hearing impaired, and as she has a close relative who is profoundly deaf, but, having applied the objective test, had concluded that she had no interest to declare.

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 10 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 11 OCTOBER, 2018

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 11 October, 2018, members **agreed** to amend Item 7 to replace the text in the third paragraph after the word "agreed" with the following: "that the presumption of local provision should be part of the Council's approach to future educational delivery".

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) **noted** the assurance of the Director of Education and Children's Services that an update report on the Pupil Equity Fund would be submitted to the meeting of the Committee on 21 March, 2019,
- (4) **noted** that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee prior to the summer recess in 2019 on options and guidelines of good practice for shared head teacher arrangements and that a member briefing would be provided by officers in the meantime, and
- (5) **agreed** that members should receive a briefing on progress made by officers with reviewing the provision of sanitary products in primary schools.

5. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PARTNER PROVIDERS

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 31 August, 2017 (Item 4), when approval had been given to the Council's response to the Scottish Government's 2017/2018 Action Plan on the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland, there was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that the Council commissioned early learning and childcare places in partner providers for, on average, 1,400 children, including those in private nurseries and parent-led playgroups, and through third sector providers, (2) outlined the current hourly rates paid per child and (3) highlighted proposals for an increased rate, together with the overall financial impact of doing so.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **agreed** arrangements to commission 1,140 early learning and childcare places with partner providers from April, 2019, and
- (2) **agreed** a partner rate of £5.31 per hour, from April, 2019.

6. CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2017/2018

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 20 November, 2018, by the Chief Social Work Officer (1) which explained the background to the production of the Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2017/2018 and (2) to which was appended a copy of the Annual Report itself.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** members' comments in respect of Looked After Children, autism, mental health provision, unpaid carers, supported accommodation and intergenerational care,
- (2) **acknowledged** the level of investment by the Council in Children's Social Work Services for the residents of Aberdeenshire,
- (3) **acknowledged** the commitment of Social Work staff in the consistent delivery of high performing services, and
- (4) **agreed** to recommend approval to the full Council of the Annual Report in respect of Children's Social Work Services, subject to the inclusion of recommendations that (a) where a lack of skilled resource makes it challenging to meet the identified outcomes for a child, priority should be given to establishing and maintaining effective local parent support groups, and work should be done to make the role of caring a more attractive employment choice and (b) the developing workstream looking at the transition from children's to adult's services should be commended.

7. NORTHERN ALLIANCE - REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT (PHASE 2) PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 30 August, 2018 (Item 11), when members had noted the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2), there was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that the Northern Alliance was a Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC), comprising eight local authorities across the north of Scotland, committed to improving the educational life chances of children and young people, (2) advised that each Collaborative

had been required to produce a Regional Improvement Plan outlining how it intended to reduce inequalities and target improvement in four national priorities, (3) highlighted the background to the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan, together with the identification of resources required to ensure workstreams were effectively supported and (4) detailed progress made by the Northern Alliance in respect of the various workstreams.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** progress made with the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2),
- (2) **noted** that a grant of up to £1,086,067 had been allocated to the Northern Alliance to enhance the RIC's activities and capacity building, and
- (3) **noted** members' comments in respect of equalities, rural poverty, emerging literacy, modern languages, conference feedback and staff improvements.

8. BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2018-2024

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Business Services Committee of 13 September, 2018 (Item 4), when the final draft of the Aberdeenshire Council British Sign Language (BSL) Local Plan 2018-2024 had been approved, and it had been agreed that an Implementation Plan be developed and presented to all area and policy committees for comment, there was circulated and **noted** a report dated 1 November, 2018, by the Director of Business Services (1) which explained the background to the development of the BSL Implementation Plan 2018-2024 and (2) to which was appended a copy of the draft Implementation Plan.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** progress made in developing the Aberdeenshire BSL Implementation Plan 2018-2024,
- (2) **noted** members' comments regarding the availability of training for elected members, online and DVD courses, the 1+2 language programme, and young people learning sign language, and
- (3) **noted** that comments would be reported to the Business Services Committee at its meeting on 10 January, 2019, where the final version of the Implementation Plan would be submitted for approval.

9. FINANCIAL MONITORING AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER, 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 23 November, 2018, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) detailed the forecast outturn for the period to 30 September, 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 30 September, 2018, and
- (2) **approved** the Revenue Budget virements, as set out within an appendix to the report.

10. SUPPLEMENTARY WORK PLAN FOR EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The Committee **agreed** to suspend Standing Order 2.1.2, in order to allow the meeting to continue beyond 1pm.

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 1 February, 2018 (Item 14), when approval had been given to the annual Directorate Work Plan for financial year 2018/2019, there was circulated a report dated 17 October, 2018, 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 Supplementary Work Plan, as contained within an appendix to the report,
- (2) **approved** the addition of the items on the Supplementary Work Plan, as detailed within an appendix to the report,
- (3) **approved** the business cases for the Early Learning and Childcare 1140 Infrastructure Programme, the contract for the provision of meat (fresh, prepared and cooked) and the contract for the provision of Commissioned Services within Learning Pathways Plus, and
- (4) **agreed** not to reserve approval of the award of the final contract for the items over £1,000,000 in value, and **noted** that the award of contracts would be dealt with by the Head of Education or the Head of Resources and Performance, as appropriate.