

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

WOODHILL HOUSE, ABERDEEN, 21 MARCH, 2019

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, A Evison, A Fakley, M Ford, V Harper, M Ingleby, R McKail, A Simpson, A Stirling (as substitute for Councillor S Dickinson), J Whyte and L Wilson.

Apologies: Dr A Barclay and Councillor S Dickinson.

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

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 Simpson advised that she had an interest to declare in respect of Item 10, by virtue of being a board member of NESCOL, left the meeting and took no part in discussion during that item.

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 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 undernoted paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Item No	Paragraph No of Schedule 7A
20	3
21	8

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE OF 7 FEBRUARY, 2019

On consideration of the circulated Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 7 February, 2019, members **approved** it as a correct record, after which the Minute was signed by the Chair.

4. PROGRESS WITH OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

There was circulated and **noted** a report by the Director of Business Services, which updated members in respect of the current position with actions arising at previous meetings of the Education and Children's Services Committee held since 14 June, 2017.

5. ABERDEENSHIRE YOUNG CARER STRATEGY 2018 – 2020: UPDATE

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 7 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that the development of a local carer strategy was a requirement of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 and that Education and Children's Services had collaborated with the Health and Social Care Partnership to develop strategies for both adult carers and young carers across Aberdeenshire, (2) advised that the implementation of the Aberdeenshire Young Carer Strategy had enabled the Council to fulfil a number of statutory duties and responsibilities, including the provision of information for, and raising awareness of, young carers and (3) outlined the financial implications arising from the development of the Strategy.

Having **noted** members' comments in respect of feedback from young persons, funding issues, Scottish Government data collection and the distribution of young carers by area, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** progress made in implementing the Aberdeenshire Young Carer Strategy, and
- (2) **acknowledged** the increase in the overall number of young carers receiving support in Aberdeenshire.

6. SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSION LIMITS AND REVISED RESERVED SPACES

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 1 February, 2018 (Item 5), when approval had been given to the secondary school admission limits for academic session 2018/2019, together with the number of reserved places for secondary schools, there was circulated a report dated 18 February, 2019, 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 for Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy, Kemnay Academy, Mearns Academy and Meldrum Academy.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the secondary school admission limits for 2019/2020, as detailed within the report, and
- (2) **approved** the number of reserved places for secondary schools for 2019/20, as detailed within an appendix to the report.

7. LONGHAVEN SCHOOL UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 11 October, 2018 (item 10), when it had been agreed to give further consideration to the “mothballing” of Longhaven School, on a temporary basis, and officers had been instructed to submit an update report to a future meeting of the Committee, there was circulated a report by the Director of Education and Children’s Services, which advised that no applications had been made by the deadline to enrol pupils at Longhaven School for the academic session from August, 2019 and that, therefore, mothballing of the school should continue.

After discussion, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the updated information provided in respect of Longhaven School, and
- (2) **instructed** officers to submit a further report to a meeting of the Committee following the start of the 2019/2020 academic session.

8. LEARNING ESTATES STRATEGY – UPDATE

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 27 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children’s Services (1) which outlined the work of the Council’s Learning Estates team within Aberdeenshire and further afield, (2) which highlighted the Service’s priorities for 2019/2020, (3) which provided details on Inverurie Community Campus, Peterhead Community Campus, Newmachar School and the Fraserburgh schools network, together with secondary and primary school enhancements at a number of other locations within Aberdeenshire, (4) which gave an update on Early Learning and Child Care delivery and indicated the priorities within Live Life Aberdeenshire, together with a capital projects overview and their projected timescales and (5) to which was appended a detailed Learning Estates update for 2018/2019, together with an evaluation of the condition and suitability of all schools within the Council’s Learning Estate.

Thereafter, and having **noted** members’ comments regarding the temporary accommodation at Stuartfield, Newmachar, Hatton of Fintray, Old Rayne and Skene schools, feedback from the Peterhead Academy engagement exercise, arrangements for notifying ward councillors, the importance of parental engagement, the Fraserburgh re-zoning consultation, the outdoor facilities strategy, clear reporting mechanisms, and Community Learning and Development accommodation at Mintlaw Academy, the Committee **acknowledged** progress made regarding the continued development of the Learning Estate.

9. ANALYSIS OF INITIAL SCHOOL LEAVERS’ DESTINATIONS DATA 2017/18

On consideration of a circulated report dated 12 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children’s Services (1) which provided a summary and analysis of the initial destinations of pupils leaving Aberdeenshire schools in session 2017/2018, (2) which offered a comparison between Aberdeenshire school leaver destinations and those in other authorities and across Scotland and (3) to which was appended a breakdown by Aberdeenshire secondary school of the employment, training, further education or other destination of its leavers, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the contents of the report,
- (2) **acknowledged** Aberdeenshire’s progress in the latest Participation Measure, the National Outcome measure for positive post-school destinations, and
- (3) **noted** members’ comments regarding analysis of specific groups of young people, sharing data with other Council teams, changes to post-school destinations, care

experienced young people, those for whom English was not a first language, and low-income households.

10. DEVELOPMENT OF FOUNDATION APPRENTICESHIPS IN ABERDEENSHIRE SCHOOLS

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 25 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained the background to the development of Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs) in Aberdeenshire schools, (2) reviewed the Council's delivery of FAs in 2018, together with a suggested new model of delivery for August, 2019 (3) and which highlighted the benefits for the Council of being an FA provider, together with additional information on the venture.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the successful Aberdeenshire Council bid to become a lead provider for the delivery of Foundation Apprenticeships from August, 2019,
- (2) **acknowledged** that strategic governance for the FA project would be undertaken through the Skills Development Scotland-led Regional Guidance Group, as detailed within an appendix to the report,
- (3) **acknowledged** that the Lead Officer for Developing the Young Workforce would report the progress of the FA project directly to the Education and Children's Services Leadership Team,
- (4) **agreed** that regular updates should be provided to the Committee, together with ongoing "milestone" evidence reporting to Skills Development Scotland, and
- (5) **agreed** that the Lead Officer for Developing the Young Workforce should provide an information briefing to area committees on Foundation Apprenticeships, as part of the governance and communication approaches.

11. ANALYSIS OF TRENDS IN ATTAINMENT IN NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS IN ABERDEENSHIRE 2009-2018

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 11 October, 2018 (Item 5), when, in considering a report on the attainment and achievement of young people in Aberdeenshire in accredited awards for the year to June, 2018, members had requested officers to submit a report to a future meeting, providing statistical trends over a period of several years, in order to assess the Council's performance over that period against relevant Council priorities, there was circulated a report dated 18 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which provided a detailed analysis of educational attainment trends in national qualifications from session 2013/2014, presented against corresponding national data and data for virtual comparator authorities.

After detailed consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the conclusion set out within the report regarding overall levels of attainment in Aberdeenshire, based on the data and analysis supplied,
- (2) **noted** the contents of the report and that it would support the ongoing strategies of Education and Children's Services to improve attainment levels across Aberdeenshire, and

- (3) **welcomed** the change in performance demonstrated by the analysis presented, with Aberdeenshire Council now improving relative to the Scottish average.

12. PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING

On consideration of a circulated report dated 25 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) was part of the Attainment Scotland Fund to be invested over the current parliamentary term, allocated to primary, secondary and special schools across Scotland on the basis of free school meal eligibility, (2) advised that each school was required to develop a PEF Plan, with a focus on priorities such as literacy, numeracy, or health and wellbeing, to complement devolved school budgets, (3) indicated that the PEF funding for Aberdeenshire would be £200,992 in academic year 2019/2020 and (4) provided a timeline for 2018/19 PEF Plans, along with exemplar plans for use in primary and secondary schools, the Committee **noted** arrangements in place for the utilisation of the Pupil Equity Fund.

13. CONSULTATION ON THE PATTERN OF SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, TERM DATES AND IN-SERVICE CLOSURE DATES FROM SESSION 2020/2021 TO 2024/2025

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Education, Learning and Leisure Committee of 29 May, 2014 (Item 2, page 1894), when it had been agreed to approve a proposed pattern of term dates, school holidays and in-service closures for the academic sessions from 2015/16 to 2019/20, there was circulated a report dated 7 January, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) outlined factors currently taken into account in determining the pattern of school holiday and term dates, (2) explained that consultation would take place with relevant stakeholders and neighbouring authorities and (3) contained the proposed closure dates for each of the sessions from 2020/21 to 2024/25 inclusive.

After discussion, the Committee **approved** consultation with relevant stakeholders on a pattern of school holiday dates, term dates and in-service closures for the five academic sessions between 2020 and 2025.

14. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE CAPITAL GRANTS FOR PROVIDERS

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 31 August, 2017 (Item 4), when members had approved Council's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) 1140 Expansion Plan to increase the provision of free Early Learning and Childcare for eligible two year olds and for all three and four year olds by 2020, there was circulated a report dated 21 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services, which (1) explained that the Council commissioned early learning and childcare places from partner providers, including private nurseries, parent-led playgroups and third sector providers and (2) proposed the establishment of an Early Learning and Childcare Capital Grant Scheme, aimed at supporting existing and new providers to increase the quality and number of 1140 hours places available.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the establishment of an Early Learning and Childcare Capital Grant Scheme for non- local authority providers,
- (2) **approved** the grant application form and the conditions set out within the Grant Scheme Guidance, both as appended to the report, and
- (3) **noted** the arrangements for the distribution of funds and prioritisation of allocations, and that this information had been shared with partner providers.

15. LITERACY STRATEGY: UPDATE

With reference to the Minute of Meeting of the Committee of 22 March, 2018 (Item 5), when members had considered the draft Aberdeenshire Literacy Strategy and had instructed officers to report back to a future meeting with a revised Strategy and Action Plan, incorporating members' comments, there was circulated a report dated 18 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the creation of the Strategy, aimed at developing good literacy skills across the whole spectrum of learners, from early years to adults, (2) which explained the consultation which had been undertaken with a variety of stakeholders in respect of the Strategy and (3) to which were appended a copy of the draft Literacy Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2021.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** progress made to date regarding the continued development of the Literacy Strategy,
- (2) **approved** the ongoing development of the Strategy, and
- (3) **requested** officers to submit a further update report on progress to the meeting of the Committee on 5 December, 2019.

16. POLICY REGISTER AND ANNUAL REPORTING

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 25 January, 2019, by the Director of Business Services, which (1) explained that Council Services had implemented a policy framework, with all policies now aligned to a particular policy committee, (2) advised that the Council's Corporate Policy Team had identified and uploaded all Council policies to a corporate management system, designed to monitor the life cycle of each policy, (3) indicated that policies were categorised using a traffic light system to indicate their readiness for review and (4) outlined the current status and timescale for review of all policies aligned to the Education and Children's Services Committee.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **acknowledged** the policies which were within the responsibility of the Education and Children's Services Committee,
- (2) **noted** the timeline of policies whose review date had passed and those which were approaching their scheduled review date, all to be considered at future meetings of the Committee,
- (3) **agreed** to prioritise for review the policies on (a) School Discipline and the Use of Exclusion and (b) Promoting and Managing Pupil Attendance, and
- (4) **requested** officers to include the Committee in a priority review of the policy on community access to educational premises.

17. REDUCING CHILD POVERTY IN ABERDEENSHIRE 2019

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 6 March, 2019, by the Director of Business Services (1) which advised that the Scottish Government had stated its commitment to ending child poverty and that the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 had placed a statutory duty on local authorities and health boards to prepare jointly and to submit an annual Local Child Poverty Action Report ("Action Plan"), identifying actions undertaken in the previous 12 months and those planned to be taken in the future to reduce child

poverty, (2) which indicated that area committees, the Education and Children's Services Committee and the Communities Committee were being consulted on the Action Plan, prior to a report thereon to the meeting of Aberdeenshire Council in April and submission of the Plan to the Scottish Government, (3) which explained the background to the Scottish Government's consideration of child poverty, including the three main drivers of employment, household costs and social security, (4) which highlighted the goals of the Council in seeking to reduce poverty and inequality in Aberdeenshire, together with the measures which had had a positive impact to date and (5) to which was appended a copy of the draft Aberdeenshire Child Poverty Action Plan 2018-2022.

Thereafter, and having **noted** the Action Plan, together with particular concerns which might be considered by the Tackling Poverty and Inequalities Group, the Committee **agreed** that officers should incorporate comments in the report to full Council on equality impact assessments, encouraging the use of credit unions, loans, the use of food banks, free school meals, the stigma of poverty, transport considerations, ensuring the involvement of appropriate criminal justice, housing and health teams, social exclusion, healthy eating and "hidden" poverty.

18. COUNCIL PLAN 2017-2022 – PRIORITY DELIVERY PLANS

With reference to the Minutes of Meetings of (1) Aberdeenshire Council of 23 November, 2017 (Item 10), when approval had been given the Council Plan 2017-2022, providing strategic direction through the confirmation of 11 priorities which provide a focus for the delivery of Council Services and (2) the Committee of 17 May, 2018 (Item 7), when it had been agreed to scrutinise the delivery plans of the priorities for which the Committee had lead responsibility, there was circulated a reported dated 5 March, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which explained the background to the development of the Council Plan, together with work undertaken to revise and update delivery plans for each of the Committee's priorities and (2) to which were appended a list of Council priorities with the relevant directorate lead.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **approved** the Council Plan 2017-2022 priority delivery plans, outcomes and outcome indicators,
- (2) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to report to the Committee on at least a six-monthly basis, providing evidence of progress with delivering the Council Plan,
- (3) **instructed** the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit the first performance report for 2018/2019 to the Committee no later than its meeting on 29 August, 2019, and
- (4) **requested** officers to provide members with an analysis of the Council's performance trends relative to the benchmark of educational provision across Scotland.

19. MEMBER PROMOTED ISSUE – A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF FLEXI-SCHOOLING

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 18 February, 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), "A Detailed Analysis of Flexi-Schooling", had been submitted by Councillor Alison Evison and that, in response, officers had prepared a paper addressing the matter. Councillor Evison spoke to her MPI, after which detailed discussion took place among members.

Thereafter, Councillor Evison, seconded by Councillor Buchan, **moved** that the Committee (1) acknowledge that flexi-schooling could meet the needs of individual children and that it was compatible with the principles of "Getting It Right For Every Child" and (2) instruct the Director of Education and Children's Services to develop a policy that was supportive of flexi-schooling as an option for individual children and which gave appropriate and transparent guidance to both schools and parents on flexi-schooling.

As an amendment, Councillor Bruce, seconded by Councillor Findlater, **moved** that the Committee acknowledge that the Council's Home Education Policy was currently being reviewed by officers and should be brought back to the Committee for consideration at the appropriate time.

Members of the Committee voted as follows:-

for the motion	(5)	Councillors Buchan, Evison, Ford, Harper and Wilson.
for the amendment	(9)	Councillors Owen, Findlater, Bruce, Fakley, Ingleby, McKail, Simpson, Stirling and Whyte.
absent from division	(1)	Mrs R Paterson.

The amendment was carried in the following terms:-

that the Committee acknowledge that the Council's Home Education Policy was currently being reviewed by officers and should be brought back to the Committee for consideration at the appropriate time.

20. SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW COMMITTEE OF 25 JANUARY, 2019

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 11 February, 2019, by the Director of Business Services, which explained the background to the operation of the Council's Social Work Complaints Review Committee and which provided details of a specific case which had been heard by the Review Committee at its meeting on 25 January, 2019.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Minute of Meeting of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee of 25 January, 2019, as appended to the report,
- (2) **noted** that Committee's decision not to uphold the complaint submitted,
- (3) **noted** the recommendation from the Review Committee to the Service that it review its practices and procedures, in order to provide an appropriate mechanism, where relationships with clients had deteriorated to an unacceptable level, allowing arrangements to be put in place to deliver the service required from an alternative source, and
- (4) **noted** the response provided by the Head of Service, as detailed within the report.

21. EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES WORK PLAN

Consideration was given to a circulated report dated 18 February, 2019, by the Director of Education and Children's Services (1) which advised that the Scheme of Governance had introduced changes to the Council's financial management arrangements, including aligning Service budget responsibility with policy committees, front loading procurement measures

and increasing expenditure thresholds for officers, (2) to which was appended the Annual Work Plan for 2019/2020 for the Education and Children's Services Directorate, including a contract description, estimated start and end dates, estimated total value, value to be approved and proposed extension period, (3) which explained that approval of the items in the Work Plan was the first stage of the approval process and (4) which provided business cases and requested the award of contract for two specified contracts.

After consideration, the Committee:-

- (1) **noted** the Directorate Work Plan appended to the report,
- (2) **approved** the items on the Directorate Work Plan,
- (3) **agreed** not to reserve approval of the business case for any of the items on the Work Plan, where the value of the matter was between £50,000 and £1,000,000,
- (4) **approved** the business cases for the two contracts appended to the report, and
- (5) **approved** the variation and award of the contract extensions for the two contracts appended to the report.

