

Services Committee
Main Hall, Town Hall, Lerwick
Thursday 8 October 2009 at 10.00am

Present:

L Angus	L F Baisley
J Budge	A T J Cooper
A T Doull	A G L Duncan
E L Fullerton	F B Grains
I J Hawkins	R S Henderson
J H Henry	C H J Miller
R C Nickerson	F A Robertson
G Robinson	J G Simpson
C L Smith	J W G Wills
A S Wishart	

Apologies:

A J Cluness	A J Hughson
W H Manson	

In Attendance:

H Sutherland, Executive Director – Education and Social Care
C Ferguson, Head of Community Care
W Weis, Service Manager – Community Care Resources
H Budge, Head of Schools
A Edwards, Quality Improvement Manager
M Moss, Quality Improvement Manager
J Thomason, Management Accountant
P Wishart, Solicitor
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mr L Angus, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

Dr J W G Wills declared an interest, as a close family member is an Education Officer.

Minutes

The minute of the meeting held 3 September 2009, having been circulated, was confirmed on the motion of Mr L Angus, seconded by Mrs E L Fullerton.

Members' Attendance at External Meetings

Mr C L Smith	Association of Community Health Partnerships Annual Conference & AGM, Edinburgh, 10-11 September
Mrs F B Grains	CPAC Seminar, Edinburgh, 4-5 September Association of Visiting Committees Conference, Stirling, 2-3 October

94/09

Blueprint for Education in Shetland – Update, October 2009

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 1).

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report, and advised Members that there was an amendment to be made to paragraph 4.2.3 in that the reference to classroom assistants should be removed, as the Single Status negotiations related to their qualifications rather than their terms and conditions.

In response to queries from Members, the Head of Schools clarified the following points:

- The costs of delivering primary and secondary education in Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles were the highest in the country, and were well above the national average.
- There was an obligation to provide teaching in Modern Foreign Languages, although it was not actually a requirement to provide this at primary school level. However there were benefits to providing it at primary school level, and it also meant that the allocated hours could be delivered earlier so that pupils no longer had to do a standard grade in a foreign language.
- It was current practice that specialist teachers would visit primary schools within the cluster, but there was currently capacity for this to happen only in some areas of Shetland. Work would be carried out to establish capacity and see if this could be carried out in an equitable way across Shetland. If it could not be carried out in an equitable way, it may mean that it would no longer happen. The work would focus on provision by the Schools Service in the first instance, but this did not mean that there was no scope to include external provision.
- The Curriculum for Excellence merged early years stages so that there was scope for nursery pupils to be educated alongside younger primary pupils. An Early Years Unit was currently operating in Dunrossness, and had been very successful, so it was hoped to introduce these in more settings. It would not happen in areas where there were large younger primary classes, but it would assist in providing a better educational experience for children in areas where there were low numbers of nursery age children. Parents would continue to be responsible for making their own arrangements for children to attend Early Stage Units. There was no intention to compete with playgroups in these areas, and they would continue to provide a valuable service.

It was noted that the information provided in paragraph 4.3.2 of the report had been included at the request of Members.

Members commented that they felt that specialist instruction in schools was valuable, and that it was important that there was equitable provision across Shetland.

It was questioned if consideration was being given to meeting educational needs from Secondary 4 onwards in local schools, or if this was to be provided in Lerwick. The Chairperson advised that this would be a decision for Members when the Blueprint for Education was presented later in the year.

On the motion of Mrs F B Grains, seconded by Mr G Robinson, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

95/09

Capital Projects Update – Services Committee Projects

The Committee noted a report by the Capital Programme Service Manager (Appendix 2).

With regard to the replacement of the Isleshavn Care Centre, the Chairperson advised that he had recently attended a meeting where the plans had been considered and approved. It was now proposed to be included in the Capital Programme, and a report would come to Members in the next cycle.

In response to a query regarding the overspend in the OT Rolling Programme, the Head of Community Care advised that Members had agreed to create additional posts to address the increasing demands on the Service. It was necessary for these staff to have space from which to work at Quendale House where the Community OT Service is currently based. In order to make space available, she and a number of other members of staff have been located office space at the old Kantersted Home. This required refurbishment, and the costs had to be placed against the OT service. She went on to confirm that the expansion of the OT service had resulted in a better service for clients. Larger items of equipment were now going into homes faster, it was possible to carry out more community rehabilitation, and staff were being supported better. There was still a struggle to cope with the backlog in terms of increasing demands.

It was pointed out that there was a need to consider the future use of the Anderson Educational Institute building, and for studies to take place regarding the future of Lerwick primary school provision. It was also noted that concerns were being raised regarding the future of the hostel accommodation, and whether it should be part of the new complex at Clickimin.

Responding to a query regarding the Interim Placement Unit at Montfield, and whether there would be scope for using it as a care home in future, the Head of Community Care confirmed that there would be 17 places in the Interim Care Home being developed at Montfield. When considering the future use of Montfield, it was increasingly felt that the best way forward would be to consider a 'step up, step down' approach, whereby people were supported to help them regain the confidence and skills to live in their own homes again. Therefore it was likely to be used for intensive rehabilitation or recuperation. There was a lot of evidence nationally that this was a successful approach, and patients generally wanted to remain in their own homes. Use had recently been made of the chalet at

Springfield owned by Shetland Charitable Trust to facilitate this approach, and it had proven to be very successful.

Mr G Robinson advised that he, and the other Members for his area, had recently attended a meeting at Happyhansel School, and the situation at the school was getting quite critical, with toilets now being used for storage space. Happyhansel was one of three schools in Shetland that fell into the 'poor or bad' category, yet it kept falling back on the Capital Programme and did not have a budget allocated to it. He therefore moved that Members agree to note the report, with the proviso that an analysis of the situation at Happyhansel was carried out and more information provided.

Mr F A Robertson seconded, and the Committee agreed.

96/09

Scottish Government Announcement on Class Sizes

The Committee noted a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 3).

The Chairperson pointed out that the Scottish Government intended to reduce Primary 1 class sizes to 25, with a view to working towards 18 in the future. The courts had recently found against local authorities that were refusing placing requests in order to limit class sizes to 25, as the legal maximum was 30 at the moment. When the new law was introduced, it would probably be necessary for the Council to consider whether or not to continue placing requests from outwith the catchment areas for the Lerwick primary schools.

The Head of Schools added that an admissions policy was something that would be considered as part of the Blueprint for Education report. In response to a query, she confirmed that there was a commitment within the Concordat to reduce class sizes in P1-P3 to 18 pupils, but that no specific funding had been allocated in order to achieve this.

97/09

New Anderson High School Capital Project

The Committee noted a report by the Executive Director of Education and Social Care (Appendix 4).

Mr F A Robertson referred to the importance of having a procedure, or a small group, in place to ensure that Members were kept fully informed of any changes. He went on to say that there were a number of criticisms relating to 'Early Contractor Involvement' or 'Design and Build' procurement procedures, and felt that following the traditional competitive tendering approach would result in the design team having more control. He expressed concern at the lack of in-house technical staff available to manage and progress the project, and proposed that more in-house technical staff should be sought.

The Executive Director advised that it was her intention to reintroduce the Member Officer Liaison Group that Members had been appointed to at the start of the project. She would circulate details of who had been appointed to Members, and it was proposed that Mr F A Robertson should be included on the Group, if he was not included already, due to his background and experience.

Dr J W G Wills referred to paragraph 5.1 of the report, and advised that the Council had not approved an indicative budget of £49million, but had instead agreed an indicative budget of no more than the current estimate. He estimated that the total costs should be more in the region of £42million, and he highlighted the potential for achieving cost savings.

The Chairperson advised that officers were having difficulty in pinning down how the cost consultant had arrived at an indicative figure of £2,000 per m², but that they would be presenting an indicative figure to the Committee when this had been resolved.

The Executive Director advised that she would remove the reference to an indicative figure of £49million, and that the figures would become clearer as part of the regular progress reports to the Committee.

It was suggested that architects could be engaged on a fee basis rather than a commission basis as this would help drive down costs for the project, and it was requested that this was investigated.

98/09 **Shetland College/Train Shetland Board of Management – Notes of Meetings held on 24 June 2009 and 23 September 2009**

The Committee noted the above (Appendix 5).

Mr R C Nickerson pointed out that the Board had noted its continued interest in the Knab site as a site for a new College.

In order to avoid the disclosure of exempt information, Mr L Angus moved, and Mr C L Smith seconded, to exclude the public in terms of the relevant legislation during consideration of the following items of business.

99/09 **New Anderson High School Capital Project: Contractual Issues**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director of Education and Social Care.

The Executive Director summarised the main terms of the report, and after some discussion, Mr A S Wishart moved the recommendations in the report noting that, with regard to recommendation 7.1(a), the final decision would rest with the Committee.

Mr F A Robertson seconded, and the Committee agreed.

The Chairperson agreed to a request to release a Press Release on the matter.

meeting concluded at 11.20pm.

