



## MINUTES

## A & B

**Education and Families Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Wednesday 29 February 2012 at 10.00am**

**Present:**

E L Fullerton	L Angus
L F Baisley	F B Grains
T Macintyre	R McKay
W H Manson	C H J Miller
D A Sandison	

**Also:**

A G L Duncan	J H Henry
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**Apologies:**

A Nunn	J G Simpson
J W G Wills	

**In Attendance:**

A Buchan, Chief Executive  
H Budge, Director of Children's Services  
M Nicolson, Executive Manager – Children's Resources  
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law  
S Thompson, Executive Manager – Schools  
R Sinclair, Executive Manager - Capital Programmes  
J Thomason, Management Accountant  
L Geddes, Committee Officer

**Chairperson**

Mrs E L Fullerton, Chair of the Committee, presided.

**Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

**Declarations of Interest**

Mr Sandison declared an interest in the following agenda items as his wife operated a private childcare business:

- Childcare Strategy 2012-2015
- Review of Grant Aid to the Childcare Sector

He advised that he would leave the Chamber during discussion of the latter due to his wife's financial interests, but intended to participate in the discussion of the former as he had no financial interest in this item.

The Chair advised that Agenda Items 5 and 8 – Performance Overview and Scalloway Secondary Department Void Space Feasibility Study – would be moved up on the agenda as they related to the discharge of the Committee's function as an Education Authority.

The Chair went on to say that the Anderson High School had recently received a very good inspection from Education Scotland that had particularly highlighted the successful integration of pupils from Scalloway Junior High School. She congratulated staff and pupils on their hard work in difficult circumstances, and advised that Jean Urquhart MSP had also used a parliamentary motion to ask the Scottish Parliament to note and congratulate the school on the report. Members concurred and offered their congratulations to staff and pupils, and noted that these would be passed on to the Head Teacher and Parent Council.

The Chair welcomed Mrs R McKay to her first meeting of the Committee.

#### 01/12 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings held on 9 November 2011 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Manson, seconded by Ms Baisley.

Except as undernoted, the minutes of the special meeting held on 5 December 2011 were confirmed on the motion of Mrs Fullerton, seconded by Dr Wills.

#### 15/11 – Anderson High School: Feasibility Report

Members noted that the references to "SFT funding" on page three should instead refer to the Scottish Government, as applications for funding would be made to the Scottish Government.

The Head of Children's Services advised that she had intimated that she would provide an update to Members regarding the Anderson High School should there be any developments by the time of the Committee. A letter had been received from the Scottish Government on 24 February regarding the context and objectives for the third phase of funding from the Scotland's Schools for the Future programme. This had been circulated to Members and was available on the Scottish Government website. Bid applications were now to be submitted by 21 July, and it would be presented to the new Council before being submitted to the Scottish Government.

#### 02/12 **Children's Services (Schools) Policy for Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Quality Improvement (Report No: CS-03-12-F), which sought approval for a revised policy for Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement for schools.

The Director of Children's Services advised that as there were now fewer Quality Improvement Officers to progress this work, it was intended to utilise senior management in schools to assist. The Local Negotiating Committee for Teaching Staff (LNCT) had approved the Policy, and welcomed senior management staff going into schools to carry out observations. In response to queries, she confirmed that there was a duty to carry out improvement visits in schools, and the senior management staff involved would carry out visits to schools other than their own. They would therefore have unrestricted access as part of the Quality Assurance team, but the inspections would be announced in line with the timescales used by Education Scotland. During work on the Blueprint for Education, fewer visits had

taken place due to staff resources, but there was generally no problem in carrying them out.

In response to a query regarding how the Schools Service met the requirements of the Curriculum for Excellence regarding specialist subjects available in S4-6, the Director of Children's Services advised that there was no statutory duty regarding all the different courses that had to be provided. It was not possible to offer the full breadth of the curriculum in all schools, and there would be limitations in some of the smaller schools. There was no statutory duty to provide religious, moral and philosophical studies beyond the core stage, so there was flexibility in how it could be offered at the examination stage. Consideration could be given to delivering this using different models of learning. Members had highlighted delivery models using IT in schools as an issue that should be taken forward in the Blueprint for Education, so there was a commitment to consider this as part of the 'refresh' of the Blueprint.

The Chair pointed out that as a result of the Council's recent budget-setting meeting, there were now a number of reviews and assessments that the Schools Service would have to undertake. The Director of Children's Services was currently developing a work plan as to how this would be approached, and would make the appropriate arrangements with the Chief Executive to carry this out.

On the motion of Mrs Baisley, seconded by Mr Manson, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to

1. approve the revised policy for Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement.

03/12

**Children's Services (Schools) Transfer Agreement**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Quality Improvement (Report No: CS-04-12-F), which sought approval for a new Transfer Agreement for Teachers.

The Director of Children's Services explained that a local agreement had previously been in place, but that unions and management had recognised that this would be inadequate due to the potential changes arising from the Blueprint for Education. She confirmed that the conditions attaching to teachers were in line with those of non-teaching members of staff, and that the LNCT had welcomed and agreed the new agreement.

On the motion of Mr Angus, seconded by Mrs Miller, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that Executive Committee **RESOLVE** to:

1. approve the Transfer Agreement for Teachers.

04/12

**Performance Overview**

A report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-06-12-F) summarised the activity and performance of the Children's Services Department for the 9 months up to December 2011 against the approved Service objectives.

The Executive Manager – Schools advised that the performance measures were currently being developed, and would be reported in June for approval. Some reviews would be taken forward before then, and the refresh of the Blueprint for Education would affect some other timescales.

It was noted that the report also contained information relating to the Sport and Leisure Service, which did not come under the remit of the Committee. The Chair however agreed to pass on concerns that had been raised regarding proposed cuts to detached youth work, and the possibility of SYIS taking over some of this role, to the relevant Committee Chair.

On the motion of Ms Baisley, seconded by Reverend McIntyre, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

1. The Committee **RESOLVED** to note the contents of the report.

05/12

**Scalloway Secondary Department Void Space Feasibility Study**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-07-12-F), which sought approval for a feasibility study to be undertaken on the Scalloway Secondary Department void space by Capital Programme Service.

Some concern was expressed regarding timescales for completion of the study. It was pointed out that NHS Shetland had expressed an interest in the space for a replacement surgery and would have to make a decision by the end of May. However this would not fit in with the Council cycle of meetings. It was also noted that the NAFC Marine Centre had expressed an interest in the space for teaching accommodation, and that the refresh of the Blueprint for Education would also have to be taken into consideration. The potential large housing development in the area that may result in an increased roll for the primary department was also referred to, and some Members were of the view that the space should be kept for educational purposes unless it was determined otherwise that this was not required.

Some discussion took place regarding an earlier Blueprint for Education option to close some of the smaller primary schools in the area, and merge them together at Scalloway. It was noted that this Council had agreed not to take this option forward. Concern was expressed that this should not act as a driver for the feasibility study.

It was felt it would be important for the Committee to meet again before the May elections in order that officials had direction from Members to continue with work during the elections period.

The Chair pointed out that it was intended to hold a Committee seminar at the end of March, to which all Members would be invited. At this point, Members could discuss the refresh of the Blueprint for Education. However the decision today related only to agreeing that the feasibility study should take place.

In response to concerns relating to timescales and the possible loss of opportunity of the NHS option, the Chair pointed out that it would be unlikely that the Feasibility Study would be complete in time for the Council meeting. However if the Convener was in agreement, she would arrange for any progress made by that time to be reported to the Council at its next meeting as there may be enough information available at this time for the Council to give this matter further consideration.

On the motion of Ms Baisley, seconded by Mrs Miller, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. Approve that a feasibility study be undertaken to consider options for the void space that became vacant when the secondary department of the Scalloway Junior High School closed.

06/12

**Childcare Strategy 2012-2015**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources (Report No: CS-01-12-F), which presented a revised Childcare Strategy for 2012-2015.

It was noted that there was very low uptake of the Child Care Voucher Scheme, and the Executive Manager – Children's Resources outlined steps that were being taken to promote this.

In response to queries, the Executive Manager – Children's Resources explained that there was a presumption against the Council providing more childcare services, and instead the facilitating the private and voluntary sector to sustain and expand provision so that services were not predominantly delivered by the Council. It was also intended to work towards a more equitable framework of fees over the next two years in order to close the gap between local authority and other provision.

Concern was expressed regarding whether this would be achievable, particularly as the private sector could not afford to reduce its charges. It was also questioned if it would be possible for the Council to subsidise the private sector in order to achieve a balance, as it may otherwise result in a two-tier system.

The Director of Children's Services explained that the Council did assist partner providers to some extent, for example by paying for premises, and there were opportunities for funding as well as grant aid which would be considered in the next report.

The Chair added that childcare was now recognised as a business by Economic Development, and grant aid was available. If Members wished work to be done on closing the gap in a faster timescale, officers would see if this was possible.

Members referred to problems of accessing childcare and nursery provision in rural areas as funding was not provided for transport. Members also commented on the potential value of childcare to the local economy as it enabled parents to enter the workforce. It was felt that discussions should take place as a priority with Economic

Development to see if there were ways of accessing funding in partnership to provide childcare.

It was pointed out that Shetland Childcare Partnership could receive further support from the Council in order to deal with the issues raised, and that the Council could consider more flexible use of premises and schools in order that they could be used for childcare provision.

It was suggested that the action plan would benefit from a review of its timescales, and the Director of Children's Services advised that it was intended to expand the Action Plan and present it again to Members.

On the motion of Ms Baisley, seconded by Mr Angus, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

Members commented on the discussion relating to the value of childcare to the local economy and, with the consent of her seconder, Ms Baisley agreed to include the following in her motion:

- That discussions should take place with Economic Development and with industry to see if there are ways of accessing funding for private childcare
- That extended opening of schools for pre-school and after-school care, and allowing Council premises to be used for this purpose by the private and voluntary sector, should be explored

**Decision:**

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council **RESOLVE** to:

1. approve the Childcare Strategy.
2. discuss with Economic Development and with industry to see if there are ways of accessing funding for private childcare
3. explore the extended opening of schools for pre-school and after-school care, and to allow Council premises to be used for this purpose by the private and voluntary sector

*(Mr D A Sandison left the meeting)*

07/12

**Review of Grant Aid to the Childcare Sector**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources (Report No: CS-02-12-F), which presented the findings of the recent review of the Children's Services Department's Revenue Grant Aid Schemes and proposed the introduction of new grant aid schemes.

Members commented on the importance of childcare to the local economy.

On the motion of Ms Baisley, seconded by Mrs Miller, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Executive Committee **RESOLVE** to:-

1. Approve the introduction of the Childminders Grant Aid Scheme with effect from 1 April 2012;
2. Approve the introduction of the Childcare Fund with effect from 1 April 2012;
3. Remove the existing grant schemes with effect from 31 March 2012; and
4. Delegate authority for both grant aid schemes to the Executive Manager – Children's Resources.

*(Mr D A Sandison returned to the meeting)*

08/12 **Shetland's Integrated Children's and Young People's Services Plan 2011-14: Progression on Actions**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-05-12-F), which sought approval of the three-year Shetland's Integrated Children and Young People's Services Plan 2011-2014.

On the motion of Dr Wills, seconded by Ms Baisley, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

1. The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Integrated Children and Young People's Services Plan work plan.

09/12 **Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: April to December 2011**

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Finance (Report No: F-017-F), which provided an opportunity to review the financial performance of services on the revenue and capital accounts in order to determine that the expenditure levels and income generated will be delivered within the approved budget for the year.

It was questioned if it would be possible to vire between budgets in order to carry out some of the things the Council would like to see done, particularly in relation to childcare, given that there were underspends in the budgets.

The Director of Children's Services advised that there were some one-off additional costs for off-island placements that would have to be funded first. However she would bear in mind Members desire to move some funding towards childcare. The Management Accountant added that there was a risk that efficiency savings would not be delivered in order to meet the Council-wide savings target.

In response to a query, the Executive Manager – Capital Programmes advised that a meeting had taken place with the Scottish Futures Trust regarding funding for Happyhansel School, but that the level of funding available still had to be clarified. He would further advise at the Members' seminar what funds should be set against this. With regard to the Anderson High School, the figures contained in the report related to slippage for 2011/12. The 2012/13 budgets would include an allowance for capital expenditure, and this would include the design fees to bring forward a more detailed plan, and also fees in relation to land acquisition.

Members noted the letter circulated to them that had been received from the Scottish Government regarding the third phase of funding from the Scotland's Schools for the Future Programme. In response to a query, the Chair confirmed that the option to pursue funding from Shetland Charitable Trust would remain as an option for consideration, but that the financial mechanism would not be discussed further until the bidding process had been completed.

Mr W H Manson declared an interest as Chairman of Shetland Charitable Trust.

On the motion of Mrs Miller, seconded by Dr Wills, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

1. review the Revenue Management Accounts, from 1 April 2011 – 31 December 2011;
2. review the Capital Management Accounts, from 1 April 2011 – 31 December 2011; and
3. review the progress on securing savings and efficiencies in the year.

The Chair advised that this would be the last meeting of the current Education and Families Committee, and she thanked Members and officers for their support.

The meeting concluded at 12.20pm.