



MINUTES

Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 7 November 2012 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

V Wishart	G Smith
P Campbell	G Cleaver
B Fox	A Manson
F Robertson	D Sandison
M Stout	

Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	R MacKay
M Tregonning	

Apologies:

F Robertson (lateness)	G Robinson
------------------------	------------

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement
H Leslie, Chief Social Work Officer
A Cogle, Team Leader - Administration
J Thomason, Management Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Ms Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

24/12

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2012 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Smith, seconded by Mr Sandison.

A Member requested that consideration be given to expanding the contents of minutes for all Committees as, whilst factually accurate, they may not fully represent the business of meetings and could be difficult to follow for anyone who had not been party to the discussion.

The Chair said that she was aware that concerns had been raised at another Committee, and she understood it was being dealt with.

25/12

Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2012/13 – Quarter 2 (April 2012 – September 2012)

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Finance (Report No: F-052-F), which enabled the monitoring of financial performance for services within the Committee's remit to ensure that expenditure incurred and income generated had been delivered within the approved budget, so that timely action could be taken when required to mitigate projected overspends.

The Management Accountant summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the projected outturn was for there to be an underspend of £0.987 million. An overspend of £0.573 million on the Directorate Service area related to the allocation of Council-wide savings. However this was offset by underspends elsewhere in the Directorate. Approved recurring savings were showing a shortfall of just over £1 million, however additional recurring savings had been identified to offset the shortfall.

In response to queries relating to the allocation of Council-wide savings to Directorates, the Management Accountant advised that there were a number of savings that had been approved by the Council where direct accountability did not exist within departments. Directors for Change had taken the decision that these savings should be allocated across the service departments on a pro-rata basis. Therefore the allocation for Children's Services was £711,000 out of the £2 million Council-wide savings required.

Concern was expressed that the savings target in terms of corporate savings appeared to have been abandoned in favour of allocating savings across Directorates, and at the potential impact that this may have on frontline services. It was requested that Directors for Change or the Corporate Management Team should revisit this to see if anything could be done regarding the proper allocation of Council-wide savings.

In response to a query, the Management Accountant confirmed that the allocation of the £2m savings across Directorates was as follows:

Chief Executive	£41,000
Children's Services	£711,000
Community Care Services	£363,000
Corporate Services	£246,000
Development Services	£296,000
Infrastructure Services	£342,000

She went on to clarify that when the budgets had been set, some costs had been quantified as one total across the Council. It had always been intended to make savings across each of the Directorates rather than within the centre, and it was an accountability issue rather than relating to an overall failure to make savings. All service areas were working hard to achieve the savings they had been tasked to achieve and to identify one-off recurring savings. It was hoped that these savings would help to mitigate the shortfall in approved savings.

The Director of Children's Services added when the budget had been set, there was no clarity about where this money should come from. Directors for Change

had made the difficult decision to allocate this across Directorates, and Children's Services had the biggest share as it had the biggest share of the budget. Whilst she was very conscious that Members did not wish to see frontline services affected, savings had to be found, and services were working together to try and find these savings without directly affecting frontline services.

In response to queries, she confirmed that there were a number of costs that came under the Directorate heading. These included costs relating to young people who required to be accommodated, Education Maintenance Allowance costs, bursaries and costs that could not be directly attributed to individual schools. These had been clearly identified during induction training and would be discussed in more detail at the seminar on 30 November. However she could reissue the induction material to anyone requiring it.

With regard to the International Agreement with Aberdeen City Council, she advised that she could supply the cost figures following the meeting. This was something that was funded from within the Council's resources. Aberdeen City Council bought staff time from the Council in order to develop its own service, and the income received helped to offset some of the costs.

It was noted that the Religious Representatives on the Committee would not have full access to the information that would be provided to Members at the seminar, and the Chair advised that she would enquire if they could be issued with an invitation.

In moving that the recommendations in the report be approved, Mr Smith congratulated the Directorate and Finance Services for their hard work in getting to the projected outturn position. He also requested that when the Quarter 3 report is presented, it includes an additional column in the table in Appendix 2 in order to show the trend from the previous quarter.

Mr Stout seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Review the Revenue Management Accounts, from 1 April 2012 – 30 September 2012, including the projected outturn position and savings in the year.

26/12

Children's Services Quarter 2 Performance Overview

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-23-12-F), which summarised the activity and performance of Children's Services for the second quarter of 2012/13 against the objectives and actions in the Children's Services Directorate Plan.

(Mr Robertson attended the meeting during the following discussion)

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the table in paragraph 3.3 which illustrated the improvements that had been made from Quarter 1. There were only two 'red' actions, both of which related to areas within Sport and Leisure. Sport and Leisure came under the remit of the Social Services Committee, but were included in this report as they formed part of the Directorate. Both 'red' actions related to health and safety

enhancements to services provided. There was no breach of health and safety, but it had been identified that it would have been useful to take these areas forward this year. Because of the current budget position, it was felt that this would not be possible.

In response to queries, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the reception at Hayfield House had recently had works carried out to accommodate the needs of the departments that had recently moved into Hayfield House. These works would ensure that the entrance and the reception areas were appropriate for these staff to deal with their clients.

With regard to the new Anderson High School, she confirmed that Children's Services were working closely with the Scottish Futures Trust and Hub North. Discussions were taking place regarding working closely with five other local authorities in order to reduce costs and ensure best value. Discussions were also taking place with a number of other organisations to help inform planning, and opportunities were being taken as part of networks to engage with national bodies. A briefing paper outlining the activity currently being undertaken would be issued to Members later today, and a report would be presented to the Council at its December meeting. A report had not been presented today as not enough information had been available to meet agenda management deadlines, and no decision was required at this stage.

Mr Sandison moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained within the report, with the addition that the two actions categorised as 'red' in Appendix 2 of the report be removed from the list of objectives and actions as, given the current financial climate, they were erroneous, surplus to requirements and there was no prospect of an outcome in the immediate future.

Mr Smith seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and agreed that the two actions categorised as 'red' in Appendix 2 of the report be removed from the list of objectives and actions.

27/12

School Term Dates, Occasional Holiday Dates and In-Service Dates for 2014/15 and 2015/16

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-20-12-F), which sought agreement to the proposed term dates, occasional holidays and in-service training dates for the years 2014/15 and 2015/16.

It was noted that additional costs were incurred when schools had to be open on the Easter public holiday. It was requested that, given the current financial climate, Members be provided with information as to the cost of schools remaining open on a Council public holiday. This would allow Members the opportunity to consider whether or not to seek a review of that earlier decision, so that staff could take this public holiday within the overall calendar instead.

The Director of Children's Services advised that she would provide this information to Members.

Mr Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained within the report, and Mr Campbell seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the dates for 2014/15 and 2015/16.

28/12

Admissions Policy

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-22-12-F), which provided an update on progress with the Statutory Consultation process regarding the introduction of the Admissions Policy, and sought a decision regarding the next steps to be taken that would allow for the implementation of the policy in January 2013.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Admissions Policy would enable Children's Services to plan and respond more efficiently to changing demand for school places, and would provide more clarity for parents accessing education for their children. In order to put the Admissions Policy in place, statutory consultation had to be carried out under the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The consultation had been carried out, and two main issues that had arisen out of the consultation related to the process for deferred entry and the catchment area for a school. The timescales set out did not allow for the policy to be presented to the Committee before the end of the year, but the consultation report would be published later today, and the Admissions Policy itself would be presented to the Council in December for approval.

It was requested that the Policy be amended to reflect the fact that young people over the age of 16 can make placing requests, and that the grammar in Section 8 be amended.

In response to queries, the Executive Manager – Quality Improvement confirmed that the number of reserved spaces would depend on individual school rolls. Reserved spaces were required for primary schools only due to the way education was delivered in primary schools. Although there were also maximum class sizes in secondary schools, there was more flexibility with the delivery of the secondary curriculum due to the range of subjects offered. If a new pupil came into a secondary school and the class for a chosen subject was at a maximum, negotiations would have to take place with the child regarding their choice of subjects and identifying suitable alternatives. However, in most circumstances, schools were not in this position. There were a few classes that were at the maximum limit, but it was not anticipated that there would be many situations where this would occur. It was also the case that other local authorities were unable to provide as wide a range of subjects due to budgetary restraints.

It was also noted that pre-school provision admission arrangements had been clarified. Some pre-school settings kept a waiting list and if it was oversubscribed, places were allocated in the priority order referred to in Section 5.5 of the document.

It was felt that there was a need to encourage parents to put their children to rural schools rather than make placing requests to bring their children into the town. Some rural schools were under-utilised as a result, and it would help ensure that rural schools remained viable. Concern was expressed that the Admissions Policy did not actively address this or do anything to help retain rural schools. It was recognised that this was a part of the wider issue relating to pre and post school

day provision, and the Chair pointed out that work was being done to consider this type of provision locally.

Mr Robertson moved that the Committee approve the recommendations contained within the report, and Mr Smith seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- confirm the publication of the Council's Consultation Report on 7 November 2012 for the required 3 week period; and
- acknowledge that although approval of this policy is a delegated exercise, the decision will be remitted to the Council on 5 December, without the requirement of a special meeting of this Committee.

29/12

Annual Report by the Chief Social Work Officer

A report by the Chief Social Work Officer (Report No: CS-24-12-F) presented information regarding the role and responsibilities of the Council's Chief Social Work Officer.

The Chief Social Work Officer summarised the main terms of the report, noting her appreciation of the involvement of the previous Chief Social Work Officer, Ann Williamson, in the report until her retiral in December 2011. Due to restructuring, the post of Chief Social Work officer now sat in Children and Families rather than Adult Services. The protection of children remained the highest priority, and all services had a part to play in safeguarding children.

She highlighted the number of referrals and case conferences that had taken place, advising that there had been the highest number of names on the Child Protection Register for some time during this period, although it had now gone down again. Every child and young person now had a named keyworker, and protection plans were monitored and post-protection plans were in place for those who were de-registered. The emergency out-of-hours service continued to be provided, but it continued to be challenging at times to operate. Workforce development was crucial for the delivery of social work services, as services could fail to be delivered if standards were not met. She concluded by saying that in the current financial climate, it may be necessary for services to be delivered differently but it was her duty to ensure that the management of risk would not be compromised and it was everyone's job to ensure that children and young people were protected from harm.

In response to queries, the Chief Social Work Officer advised that the Children's Rights Service was funded from Children's Services budgets, and that the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and the voluntary sector provided the service. All looked-after children were given information regarding the service, and there were advocacy services within the CAB to assist parents. There were also opportunities within the Children's Hearings System for solicitors to be appointed to ensure that parents understood the proceedings. It was possible that there could be an increased demand for advocacy services as a result of budget cuts, and this would also be the case for other social work services provided by the Council.

The Chief Social Work Officer also confirmed that the Mental Health Officer in Aberdeen, as referred to in section 3.8.1, was an arrangement that had been set up a few years ago in order that mental health patients who had to leave the island could be dealt with within the timeframe that applied. A nominal fee was paid for

this arrangement, and a fee was also paid towards a social worker based in Cornhill.

In response to a query regarding a care package that the Council was funding on the mainland, as referred to in paragraph 3.8.1, the Chief Social Work Officer advised there would be a period of consultation with the other local authority as to when it would take on responsibility for the case.

She went on to confirm that, given the multi-agency approaches that were now employed, she was confident that there was clarity regarding the contribution by other providers of services. She felt that reviews were more rigorous than they had been in the past, the processes had now improved, and she was confident that everyone was aware of what was being delivered by the third sector and other agencies.

Decision:

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.35am.

.....
Chair