



MINUTES

Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 23 January 2013 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also:

T Smith

Religious Representatives:

R MacKay	M Tregonning
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Apologies:

T Macintyre

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law
S Thompson, Executive Manager - Schools
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
J Thomason, Management Accountant
A Cogle, Team Leader – Administration
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Ms Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Tribute

The Chair paid the following tribute to Anne O'Neill, Head Teacher of Baltasound Junior High School.

"It is with sadness that I have to inform the Committee of the death of Anne O'Neill, the Head Teacher of Baltasound Junior High School. She came to Shetland in 1980 and took up the post of teacher of home economics at Mid Yell for a short time. She then was a teacher of home economics at Baltasound from 1987, and her career continued to develop in Unst from then until now. She was an assistant principal teacher, principal teacher, and in 2009 was

appointed Head Teacher. I acknowledge the long service she has given to education in Shetland and her commitment to the children and young people of Unst in particular.

Her funeral is tomorrow in the Borders and the management team from the school will represent Shetland Islands Council at this. There is also a memorial service on Monday 28 January in Unst.

I proposed that a letter of condolence is sent from the Education and Families Committee to her family”.

The Committee concurred.

Deputation

The Chair advised that Mr Jeremy Sansom, on behalf of the Chairpersons of Shetland’s Junior High Schools, had submitted an application for a deputation.

She confirmed that the application had been received in accordance with Section 17 of the Council’s Standing Orders and, in accordance with the Standing Orders, she was required to ask the Committee if it unanimously agreed to hear the deputation.

The Committee unanimously agreed to hear the deputation.

Mr J Irvine, Mid Yell Parent Council, Mr J Sansom, Aith Parent Council, and Ms C Waddington, Baltasound Parent Council, on behalf of Shetland secondary school parent councils, then gave a presentation to the Committee. They advised that they had prepared a paper, which they would distribute following the meeting, using information that was available in the public domain or that had been received using Freedom of Information requests. Their paper highlighted that Shetland schoolchildren would be facing the highest travelling times in Scotland, the highest rates of hostelling in Scotland, and high staff/pupil ratios and high rates of spending on ASN in Shetland compared to other areas of Scotland. The paper proposed that instead of closing junior high schools to make the savings required, the appropriate budgetary cuts could be made by applying staffing formulae used in the rest of Scotland to Shetland schools, by establishing a federated Junior High School of Shetland with one head and five/six sites, by setting reasonable targets for ASN spending comparable with other local authorities, and by reconsidering the size of the new Anderson High School.

Following questions from Members to the deputation, Ms Wishart moved that the Committee note the deputation, and Mr Robinson seconded.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

01/13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2012 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Tregonning, seconded by Mr Robertson.

02/13 Children’s Services Quarter 3 Performance Review

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (Report No: CS-02-13-F), which summarised the activity and performance of Children’s Services for the third quarter of 2012/13 against the objectives and actions in the Children’s Services Directorate Plan.

The Director of Children’s Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the report had been prepared using the same format that was used

for other Directorates. Therefore it did not include performance information that related specifically to services provided by Children's Services, but it was hoped to include this in future reports. The anticipated year-end figure, as referred to in paragraph 5.2 of the report, was that there would be an underspend of approximately £254,000. This included money that it had not been possible to spend this quarter that would be carried through to the next quarter.

It was requested that in order not to lose track of recurring savings that had been identified across the Council, it would be useful for a report to be presented to the Executive Committee that provided narrative on progress that had been made, so that there was an understanding of how successful the 2012/13 budget had been in achieving savings across the Council.

The Director of Children's Services then responded to queries regarding the performance indicators appended to the report, and Members noted the following:

- Some areas of the Directorate had very small staff numbers, so if one member of staff was on sick leave, this could result in a high percentage figure for sickness leave.
- The Schools Service had a large number of peripatetic staff travelling between different schools, so mileage figures tended to be high.
- Because there were large numbers of staff in Children's Services, sickness levels could be high and a number of staff were on long-term sick leave for serious conditions. Work was ongoing with Human Resources and the Staff Welfare Officer to ensure that the best type of support mechanisms were in place for these staff.
- Future reports would contain data that was more relevant to the subject matter of the Committee, such as exam results, numbers of looked-after children, access to short-term breaks and library usage.
- "Quality Improvement" staff included teaching staff, whereas "Schools" Staff referred to the support staff in schools including cleaning, catering and ASN staff. It was felt that this could be confusing, and the Director of Children's Services said that she would explore if this information could be made clearer. Information could also be provided to Members regarding numbers of support staff, and the historical context that had resulted in the current numbers of support staff in schools.

Decision:

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

03/13

Blueprint for Education 2012-17: Technical Amendment

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-01-13-F), which sought to amend the Blueprint for Education 2012-2017 Report.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the report had been produced following a request by Sandwich Junior High School Parent Council. The request, which was appended to the report, was very clear that the Parent Council did not want the school to close and that they

wanted all other viable options to be considered before the commencement of statutory consultation. But if it were the case that statutory consultation was to commence, they would rather be considered in Phase 1 than Phase 3.

It was questioned what the resource implications would be for Children's Services, given that there may now be four statutory consultations to be carried out in 2013.

The Director of Children's Services advised that advertisements had already been placed for another clerical assistant to assist and it was hoped to second someone internally to this position. This was the reintroduction of an additional resource, as there had been someone in place until the previous statutory consultations had ceased. There was also an officer in place designated to work with the Blueprint, although they were now due to go back into the school. Consideration would be given to seconding someone internally on a temporary basis to assist, although it was likely that their remit would be wider than just the Blueprint.

It was questioned what the resource implications would be if other schools came forward with similar requests, and concerns were expressed that the service would not have enough resources in place to carry out the required consultations. It was also commented that Members had an obligation to ensure that departments were resourced adequately in order to bring forward reports.

The Director of Children's Services advised that any further requests would have to be considered in the context that they were submitted, but that she would not look to be employing anyone beyond the two posts referred to. In the past, Children's Services had been able to carry out up to four statutory consultations at one time.

It was noted that it was originally the intention that Sandwick Junior High would not close until the new Anderson High School was open, and it was questioned if this would still be the case.

The Director of Children's Services advised that this was something that would form part of the consultation paper, and any views expressed as part of the consultation process would be taken into account.

In response to queries, she went on to say that no date had yet been published with regard to the Appeal in the Court of Session. There were indications that the Commission on Rural Education would be reporting very soon. There had been some media leaks in relation to the draft report, and she could copy these links to Members if required. However the legislation in relation to the statutory consultation process remained as it was, and other local authorities were currently actively engaging in this process.

She went on to confirm that progress reports on the three areas that Children's Services had been asked to consider – secondary 1-3 education, the hub and spoke model, and the use of IT – would be presented to the Committee in March, and some of the issues raised by the deputation today would be considered as part of this process.

In commenting that both the report and the deputation at the meeting were an illustration of how communities desired to be involved in the process, and were also an illustration of how the Council was willing to be involved in meaningful consultation with communities, Mr G Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report.

Ms Wishart seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve to approve the amendment to the Blueprint for Education 2012-2017 (Report No: CS-19-12-F), so that Statutory Consultation on the proposed closure of Sandwich Junior High School secondary department commences in 2013 instead of 2015.

The meeting concluded at 11.05am.

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Chair