



MINUTES

B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Wednesday 22 May 2013 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

V Wishart	G Smith
P Campbell	G Cleaver
B Fox	F Robertson
G Robinson	D Sandison

Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	M Tregonning
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Also:

M Burgess	A Cooper
S Coutts	T Smith
J Wills	

Apologies:

A Manson	R MacKay
M Stout	

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
N Grant, Director of Development Services
J Gray, Executive Manager – Finance
H Leslie, Executive Manager – Children and Families/Chief Social Work Officer
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law
J Edwards, Quality Improvement Officer
B Leask, Team Leader – Youth Services
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
B McDonald, Solicitor
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also:

C Hislop, Audit Scotland
K McAulay, Audit Scotland

Chairperson

Ms Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

The Chair ruled that in order to ensure that the approval of the Shetland Youth Strategy could be considered in public, the following item of business was to be considered at this meeting as a matter of urgency in terms of subsection 4 of section 50B of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

Agenda Item 6a – Shetland Youth Strategy - Report by the Director of Children's Services

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2013, on the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Robertson.

19/13 Children's Services Quarter 4 Performance Overview

A report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-22-13-F) summarised the activity and performance of Children's Services for the last quarter of 2012/13 against the objectives and actions in the Children's Services Directorate Plan, including each service area's improvement plan.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that good progress was being made against the priorities identified and that only three actions were now rated as 'red', with corrective action being taken against those rated as 'amber'.

The Director of Children's Services then responded to questions from the Committee, and the Committee noted the following:

- Reduction in overtime could be demonstrated across Children's Services as a whole, and information was available for each department if required.
- Whilst pupil/teacher ratios and class sizes appeared to be getting larger, it was also important to bear in mind pupils rolls and year groups when considering these figures in detail.
- There was a decrease in the number of pupils achieving 5 or more qualifications at SCQF Level 4 or higher at the end of S4, but a corresponding increase in those achieving at SCQF Level 5 as it was found that many young people were able to undertake credit rather than general.
- Attendance rates had not been included to date, but would now be recorded on a monthly basis and reported quarterly.
- The 'red' actions in the report pertained to the Sport and Leisure service. Two of these related to resource factors, although there were no health and safety issues as a result. The shift from 'green' to 'amber' in some instances also related to resource issues.
- Sport and Leisure had more actions compared to other services, but this was largely due to way the different services had interpreted the planning process in the past. It was anticipated that the figures would become more proportionate as the new format became embedded.

It was commented that officers would have spent a lot of time preparing the figures for this plan, which concentrated on relatively minor areas of the Directorate. However there were other major important issues in service areas that were not subject to as much scrutiny.

Decision:

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

20/13

New Anderson High School – Progress Report

A report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-26-13-F), which provided an update on progress regarding the project to replace the Anderson High School.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the New Project Request (NPR) for the Anderson High School (AHS), appended to the report, had now been submitted to the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT). Work was ongoing in relation to the design and build model of delivery for the Hall of Residence and alterations to the Clickimin Leisure Complex, and this would be reported to the next meeting of the Committee. Both projects would happen at the same time. The pre-planning process would commence as soon as site investigations had been completed, and it was hoped this would happen in the next few weeks.

The Director of Children's Services and Executive Manager - Finance then responded to questions from the Committee, and the Committee noted the following:

- The Council had made a commitment to the SFT that construction would commence in March 2014, and a report would be presented to the Committee should this not be possible.
- The Council still had to make a decision as to whether to take the £12million required from reserves or borrow it. A good return had been received on investments this year, but markets could not keep going up. The medium-term financial plan was in the process of being updated and the investment strategy would also be updated, and these would be presented to a special meeting of the Council on 26 June.
- The site configuration was currently being re-examined, as contaminated land from the old town dump had to be taken into account.
- Discussions with the SFT regarding the geographical uplift were still ongoing. Hubco were looking at a 20% uplift, but the Council were working on the basis of a 25% uplift. The reasoning behind this had been explained to Hubco, but there was no confirmation yet as to whether this would be acceptable.
- The NPR had been produced using a template, the purpose of which was to demonstrate the requirements for the school. Therefore in terms of ICT, it focused on provision of ICT within the school itself rather than being an overall vision of how ICT could be used outwith the school to deliver learning elsewhere. However video-conferencing technology to help enable this had been included in the NPR. It was suggested that this should be a priority as the project moved ahead.

- The Hall of Residence would be a design and build contract, and the Council could use the proportion of money it was putting in for this purpose. However it all formed part of the same building project, and the Scottish Government would be funding two-thirds of this project. How the Council was choosing to finance the project would give a better end result and other local authorities were looking to do the same, with some increasing their funding in order to enhance the community benefit by including additional facilities such as swimming pools.
- The Council had agreed that Shetland Recreational Trust (SRT) should be approached regarding sharing facilities available within the Clickimin Leisure Complex, and the Council was working closely with SRT to facilitate this. Missives had been exchanged in relation to the sale of land, and the possibility of purchasing more was being considered. The cost of the land was included in money allocated to the project in the Capital Programme, but was outwith the £12million required for the project. The alterations referred to in the report related to the alterations it was felt would be required to facilitate the delivery of PE using the Clickimin Leisure Complex. Therefore rather than putting PE facilities in the school, the proportion of funding from the Scottish Government allocated to PE facilities would be used to enhance the facilities at Clickimin so that it could cope with the additional PE classes. No figures were available as to what this would cost, but the money allocated as part of the project was around £1.5million. The Council had yet to enter into a service level agreement with SRT, and ownership of the new facilities and potential income generation for SRT would form part of that discussion.
- Appendix E, referred to in the NPR, had not been circulated as the finances were still being worked though with SFT. This information could be provided to the Committee if required, but it was still very much in draft format.
- The total capital cost, referred to in Appendix A(ii), should read “£31,770,025.00” and it did not include the Hall of Residence or alterations to the Clickimin Leisure Complex. More detailed information relating to the breakdown of costs allocated to each of these areas could be provided to members of the Committee on request, but had not been included with this report as the costs were still being worked out. There was no financial cap on the project as costs were still indicative and there were potential inflationary factors.
- The maintenance elements of the project were not as rigid as previous PFI contracts had been, and they would be set out in a service level agreement. Day-to-day maintenance would be carried out by in-house staff, and as much as possible would be done locally. Wider maintenance costs would form part of a contract and every effort would be made to ensure that the best deal was achieved for the Council. Efforts were also being made to take everyone’s views into account, and there was a stakeholder group as a sub-group to the Project Board.
- In terms of the design, the Scottish Government had two reference schools and the one that most reflected the requirements in Shetland was Eastwood High School. That would be used as a starting point by the architect, and then developed to take local requirements into account, engaging with pupils and

staff as part of this process. It was further suggested that Architecture Scotland could be used to scrutinise the project as it goes ahead.

- No specific consideration had been given to the installation of artworks, but a lot of work from the previous stages would be taken into account. Engagement with young people would take place to make sure that there were appropriate spaces for the installation of artworks.
- Due to timescales, consideration had not been given as part of this project as to whether the old school buildings or site could be used to offset some of the costs of the new school. Capital Programmes had a working group considering the site and options for the future.

Mr Cleaver asked for his concerns surrounding the project to be placed on record. He advised that his concerns were partly tempered by an acceptance that the overwhelming will of the current Council is for it to happen, but mainly related to the financial vehicle to fund the project and how it sat with the contractual commitments of the Council in the post-construction phase. He drew attention to the fact that he had repeatedly asked officials if the funding model was a 'rebranded PFI' model, and had always been told it was not. However when he had questioned Hubco officials, they had stated that it was. He was of the view that if lessons had been learned from previous models, it may be possible to engage with the new model. However many other public bodies had found it to be a disastrous model, and he felt that there was no clear understanding of the additional cost to the public purse of the financial and maintenance elements of the contract. He questioned why the new AHS would be in the top 12% of the largest schools in Scotland, and also the political motives for awarding the funding. Whilst, as a Committee member, he was happy to engage with and support the project, he would continue to challenge the technical details and deliverability.

Decision:

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

21/13

Clothing Grants – Revised Policy

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-23-13-F), which sought approval for a revised Children's Services Policy on the eligibility criteria for Clothing Grants.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Council was one of only two in Scotland that awarded a clothing grant for pre-school children. The provision of clothing grants was statutory in respect of children attending school only, but legislation did not state what the grant amount should be. However the amount provided locally was felt to be appropriate and was commensurate with other areas. A change in the policy would also mean that the 'SEEMIS' system could be fully utilised to process clothing grant payments.

In response to queries, the Director of Children's Services advised that the other options available to access clothing included charity shops. Pre-school children were not considered to be as needful of the grant as primary and secondary school children, as specialist clothing was not required for nursery education and children only attended for a two-year period. The clothing grant was advertised quite widely, and it was felt that those who required the grant were accessing it. She confirmed that there was no school uniform policy locally and that whilst discussion

regarding the policy had not taken place specifically with nursery providers, Head Teachers were aware of the content of the report.

In moving that the Committee should recommend that the change to the Clothing Grants Policy should not be approved, Mr G Smith referred to the Councils corporate priorities, and the importance of being mindful of the need to focus on early intervention and how such a policy change could affect the vulnerable and disadvantaged. It was possible it could affect whether or not parents chose to access pre-school education for their children. Whilst the cost to the Council was not high, it did not take into account the value of the grant to some parents.

Mr Campbell seconded.

In moving that the recommendation in the report be approved, Mr Tregonning referred to the wider social implications of child poverty and said he felt that if there was an issue locally whereby parents were unable to clothe their children, then the amount of grant awarded would make little difference to the wider problem.

However he did not receive a seconder.

During the discussion that followed, some members were of the view that removal of the grant would be seen to be further disadvantaging vulnerable people, and that the amount that would be saved represented only a tiny proportion of the overall savings that were required.

Other members commented that officers were doing what had been asked of them by the Council, and that more consideration should have been given at that time as to the benefits of reviewing this policy. The Committee paid tribute to officers for doing what was asked of them and in considering all areas in an attempt to realise the savings required of them.

Decision:

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Executive Committee recommend that the Council resolve to retain the existing Clothing Grants Policy.

22/13

Instrumental Instruction Review

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Schools (Report No: CS-21-13-F), which provided an update on work done thus far on the review of instrumental instruction in Shetland.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the proposals had come from the inter-agency working group set up to look at instrumental instruction. The proposals would mean that there was a better balance of provision across Shetland, and would realise savings of £182,000.

In response to queries, the Director of Children's Services advised that it was intended that the senior instructor would still be involved in delivering tuition. Group tuition was being proposed to help ensure a better balance of provision. Whilst parent councils had not been keen on this option, music instructors were keen to explore this and it worked well in other local authority areas. Consideration would have to be given to the charging position if group tuition was introduced, as pupils would not be receiving individual instruction but actual tuition time would be increased. She also clarified that the review currently being carried out by the

Scottish Government was unlikely to have any bearing, as it focused on charging for instruction when pupils were sitting qualifications, but this did not happen locally.

Concern was expressed at the future of brass and lower strings tuition, given the proposed reduction in provision, and that this would reduce the opportunities available for young people.

In moving that the recommendations in the report be approved, Ms Wishart advised that she had been part of the working group and she paid tribute to those involved in it. She felt that the proposals it had come up with went a long way to addressing the problems that had arisen in the service and would help ensure that provision could continue in the future, given that music was such an important part of Shetland culture.

Mr Robertson seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED:**

- To approve the actions developed within the working group, namely:
 - The exploration of group instruction;
 - The conversion of one existing instructor post to facilitate a 0.5 full time equivalent senior instructor position; and
 - To work towards establishing a balance of provision;
- That the review of instrumental instruction is now complete but that the scheme of provision be reviewed over the next academic year.

(Reverend McIntyre left the meeting)

23/13

Development Services Directorate Plan 2013/14

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (Report No: DSD-03-13-F), which presented the draft Development Services Directorate Plan, setting out the policy and performance management framework for the directorate and outlined the aims, objectives and actions for Development Services Directorate for the financial year 2013/14.

The Director of Development summarised the main terms of the report, advising that matters relating to community learning and development came within the remit of the Committee. He went on to say that a review of tertiary education was currently being carried out and would be reported to the Council on 12 June. A review of community learning and development would also be carried out, and would report back later in the year. Several other pieces of work relating to community planning and development would be carried out this year, and training opportunities with the oil and gas sector were actively being explored. Train Shetland had also been successful in moving from a Council-commissioned training business to achieving around 50% of its business from the private sector. The Council was undertaking a review of its training requirements, and that would have an impact. A report on this would be presented to the Council in June.

In response to queries, the Director of Development advised that low staff morale had been identified as a risk due to the number of reviews being carried out in

Development Services. This made people concerned regarding their job security, so it was important to conclude these reviews as soon as possible. There were also issues of uncertainty around what staff were being asked to do. Significant steps had been taken to address this so that everyone was certain what was being asked of them. He went on to say that at the time of writing the report, there had been uncertainty about the impact of the regionalisation agenda on Shetland College. Now that more information was available, he did not feel that there would be as much of a threat. With regard to community planning, efforts were being made to ensure that the Council and other stakeholders participated fully in the community planning process, and made it a high priority for their organisations.

Mr G Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendation in the report, and Mr Robinson seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Review and discuss the contents of the Draft Directorate Plan and Service Action Plans relating to the Community Planning and Development and Train Shetland;
- Endorse the contents of the Plan; and
- Approve the priorities for the Development Services Directorate for the financial year 2013/14 as set out in the Plan, in relation to Community Planning & Development and Train Shetland.

24/13

Shetland Youth Strategy

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-29-F), which presented a strategy for the delivery of youth work in Shetland, and set out the proposed Shetland Youth Strategy as it had been developed following meetings with people involved in delivering services to young people.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the report had been prepared using the information pertaining to the Youth Strategy only from the following report on the agenda, in order that consideration of the Shetland Youth Strategy could be held in public. She went on to say that community consultation had taken place, and there had been some good discussions at these meetings. The draft Youth Strategy had been prepared taking this feedback into account, and it set out how it was intended to take forward locally the areas that had been recognised nationally. The Strategy would also be presented to the Children and Young People's Forum, and an action plan would be delivered by that group.

In moving that the recommendation be approved, Mr G Smith noted that there was still some work to be done in terms of partners considering the whole document. So the Committee would be endorsing it in terms of the Youth Service's contribution, and they would be taking it forward with other partners.

Mr Robinson seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council **RESOLVE** to approve the Shetland Youth Strategy.

Ms Wishart moved that in order to avoid the disclosure of exempt information, the Committee resolve to exclude the public in terms of the relevant legislation during consideration of the following items of business. Mr Robertson seconded.

(Members of the public and the media left the meeting)

25/13

Review: Provision of Youth Services in Shetland

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Schools which presented a proposal to restructure the Council's Youth Service to ensure their delivery of the Shetland Youth Strategy.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that as the Shetland Youth Strategy had been approved in the earlier item only the second part of the recommendation in paragraph 2.1 - pertaining to the restructure proposal - would now apply. During the consultation process, communities had emphasised how important it was for young people to experience youth work and that it was important that some youth services should continue to be delivered at a junior level. These points had been taken into account.

The Director of Children's Services and Team Leader – Youth Services then responded to queries from Members.

Concerns were expressed in relation to the ability to deliver the Youth Strategy on a reduced budget, and it was felt that there was a need for further consultation and a strategy for community involvement.

The Director of Children's Services explained that the Strategy was a multi-agency document, and she felt that it would be possible to deliver it in the context of budget reductions. The proposals in the report took account of the issues raised in the public consultation, and would be presented to the Employees' Joint Consultative Committee. It would be important to continue dialogue with staff and communities as proposals went forward.

In moving that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, Mr Robinson said that his concerns about the proposals had been allayed now that the issues raised during the public consultation had been taken account of, and he felt that an appropriate balance had been struck between paid staff and volunteers.

Mr Cleaver seconded.

Mr G Smith said that whilst he agreed that the proposals would help ensure that staff were better trained and that there was a role for volunteers, he felt that the Youth Strategy that had earlier been approved was very different in terms of the expectations of the past when youth clubs had been run by volunteers. It was important to take time to get things right, and he felt that it would be appropriate to wait for one cycle so that everyone was full aware of the proposals and how it was intended to resource them.

He accordingly moved, as an amendment, that the report be deferred for one cycle in order to enable further consultation to take place.

Mr Sandison seconded.

After summing up, voting took place by show of hands, and the result was as follows:

Amendment (Mr G Smith)	4
Motion (Mr Robinson)	4

The Chair used her casting vote in favour of the motion.

Decision:

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Executive Committee recommend that the Council resolves to approve restructure proposal for the Youth Service.

(Mr Robinson left the meeting)

26/13

Corporate Parenting Report

The Committee considered a joint report by the Executive Manager – Children and Families/Chief Social Work Officer, which provided an update on the progress of the proposals approved for Corporate Parenting.

The Executive Manager – Children and Families/Chief Social Worker summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the new duties and requirements that would arise from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill which had just been introduced to Parliament. She then went on to respond to queries from Members.

Members commented that they felt the inclusion of the ‘pen pictures’ helped to provide a much clearer picture on individual circumstances and needs, and suggested that they could be enhanced by also containing reference to services the young people were engaging with outwith the school setting.

Decision:

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

The meeting concluded at 1.15pm.

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Chair