



MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 26 May 2014 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Religious Representatives:

R MacKay

Also:

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| A Cooper | R Henderson |
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Apologies:

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| T Macintyre | M Tregonning |
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In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
N Grant, Director of Development Services
J Gray, Executive Manager – Finance
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
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

None

10/14 **Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2013/14 Draft Outturn**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (Report No: F-025-F), which enabled the Committee to review the financial performance of services within its remit.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular the underspend on revenue, the overspend on capital,

budget variances, and the proposed carry forward figures to 2014/15 which had been verified by Finance staff. He pointed out that building maintenance costs were £140,000 under budget and cautioned against classing this as a saving, as it was likely to be a deferral of spending that would have to happen at a later date. The overspend in relation to the Anderson High School (AHS) project was a profiling issue, and the project was still within the overall cost envelope.

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

- The total outturn position was an underspend of £1,142,000 on revenue, and because of carry forwards, this meant that £465,000 of this figure had been banked. Staff were currently working on a breakdown as to what percentage of the overall savings were recurring and non-recurring savings.
- The savings in Additional Support Needs (ASN) related to a lesser need in some schools than had been the case in the past due to the organisation of support staff depending on class composition, and as some of the young people moved into Adult Services. It was felt that this would be a recurring saving, but it was possible that other young people could come into the system and this would no longer be the case. The Managing Inclusion guidelines set out levels of need, and services locally were audited on an annual basis.
- Building maintenance had been reduced over the last few years, and statutory maintenance was always carried out first. Maintenance was also reviewed annually, and it would be important to monitor this in order to ensure that problems were not exacerbated as a result of maintenance being delayed for a year or two. Some specific maintenance projects were included in the request for carry forward funding.
- The Council had not seen peaks in spending in Period 12 over the last few years, so it was felt that there had been a change in culture. The provision to carry forward underspends had also improved this situation.
- There were vacant posts in Children and Families and Children's Resources, and there had been difficulties in recruiting to some posts and filling some of them on an established basis. This was being closely monitored, and workforce planning was being carried out to ensure that this did not cause problems for existing staff. Agency staff had been used when necessary to support staff, but the budget was underspent even when these costs were taken into account.

Mr Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr Fox seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- Note the Management Accounts showing the controllable outturn position for 2013/14; and
- Note the proposed carry forwards which will be included in the Overall Outturn report which will be presented for approval at Policy and Resources Committee on 28 May 2014.

(Mr Campbell left the meeting)

11/14

12 Month Performance Overview – Children's Services

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-08-14-F), which summarised the activity and performance of Children's Services for Quarter 4 of 2013/14.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the developing of a new commissioning strategy was still classed as 'amber' as the Council was waiting on the Scottish Government to conclude work it was carrying out in this area. A national strategy would be of benefit to the Council as it did not have the volume of work to bid resource costs down in this area.

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

- The number of children involved in Child Protection investigations was closely monitored and although the figure had risen, this could be attributed to family numbers as a larger family involved in Child Protection investigations meant that there was a corresponding increase in the number of children. There was currently no evidence that austerity measures at a national level was impacting on figures locally.
- Registration for free school meals had increased, but there had been a decline in numbers applying for clothing grants and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). This would be monitored, but the Council had not made any changes to publicity and they continued to be advertised widely locally.
- The number of looked-after children reviews completed within required timescales had dropped by 1%, but staff were comfortable that there was still a very high rate being completed. This was the first year that reports to the Children's Reporter being completed within required timescales had been recorded, so this figure would now be explored in more detail.
- Bressay Primary School had not been included in the report as it had not been one of the targets set by the Council to be reported on at that time. Some consideration could be given as to how to report on new activity that arose during the reporting period.
- A decision had been made not to use Windybrae for respite accommodation unless required, and a review of residential accommodation was going to be undertaken.
- The Council was always looking for new foster parents. There had been a decrease in the number of fostering nights over the last few months but it was very much a demand-led service.
- The Olnafirth School building was still being used to deliver education, so was not yet surplus to requirements. The Director of Children's Services had delegated authority to declare when it would become surplus to requirements, and it would then transfer to the Asset and Properties Section. A report would then be prepared for Members regarding the future of the building.

In response to a question from a Member, the Director of Children's Services advised that she would check the position regarding the follow-up to the Health Impact Assessment carried out by NHS Shetland with regard to the Skerries School Secondary Department.

Mr Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr Stout seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee discussed the contents of the report.

12/14

12 Month Performance Overview – Development Department

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (Report No: DV023-F), which summarised the activity and performance of the Development Directorate for Quarter 4 of 2013/14.

The Director of Development Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting progress in the areas that came under the remit of the Committee, namely community planning and development, adult learning, community work and Train Shetland. It was noted that there was a typographical error in Appendix 2 of the report, and that the second description of risk/mitigation should instead read "College *regionalisation* means decisions are made outwith Shetland and has a negative impact on skill development".

The Director of Development Services then responded to questions, and Members noted the following:

- The Council received assistance with funding for some of the training delivered by Train Shetland. Some of this was received via Skills Development Scotland for apprenticeships, and some was received from the Scottish Funding Council via Shetland College. Funding received was based on student numbers and outcomes.
- Staff morale could be low when employees were concerned about their jobs and roles. Shetland College and Train Shetland were still undergoing review, and this added to uncertainty.
- There had been positive improvements in sickness rates in the Directorate, although they were showing as a downwards trend because of seasonal variation.
- The Council had made big steps forward in enabling staff to work remotely, although this had not necessarily been reported. There had been some discussion in the past regarding community 'hubs' but these had not been implemented, and the focus now tended to be on enabling staff to work from home.
- The review of community planning and development had been completed, and a way forward was now much clearer. A range of projects were being carried out, or would be carried out over the next year, to enable staff to get into a position of supporting and engaging with communities.

- Overtime costs would require to be addressed. The figures were relatively stable, although there had been an upward peak recently largely due to absence cover.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee discussed the contents of the report.

13/14

Children's Services Directorate Plan 2014/15

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-09-14-F), which presented the final edit of Children's Services Directorate Plan for 2014/15.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the objectives for the current year and the achievements over the last year. As had been referred to earlier in the meeting, Bressay Primary School had not been included in the list of achievements over the last year and this would be added in. She went on to highlight that there had been some misunderstanding in relation to the self-evaluation question relating to staff morale, so this figure should improve next year.

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

- There had been an increase in positive responses regarding the question relating to whether elected members demonstrated a strong commitment to improving children's services in Shetland. Weekly meetings took place with the Chair and Vice Chair, and other officers were now being invited to become involved. The involvement of Members in things such as the statutory school closure consultations had been appreciated by staff.
- A direct comparison to the self-evaluation exercise could only be made over the last two years because some of the respondents had been in different Council departments when the exercise had first taken place. Efforts had been made to try and ensure all staff could participate. School staff were not included in this particular exercise as self evaluation was included in each school's own plan, and it was only the self evaluation in respect of the Directorate Plan that was included as part of this report. However consideration could be given to providing the information from schools to Members as part of a briefing report.
- It was hoped that the Integrated Children and Young People's Strategic Planning Group would have defined the remaining targets by June. This group was a sub-group of the Shetland Partnership and involved a number of agencies.

In response to a comment as to whether Members could be reassured that there would be sufficient resources to carry out the change projects given the reduction in staffing at Hayfield House, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that a Client Advisor had been contracted to help support staff with the new AHS project and support was also in place for the Shetland Learning Partnership project. So established staff were receiving some support and assistance to help deliver these projects.

Mr Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report, and Mr Fox seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** this version of the Plan for further sharing with partners, staff and the community.

14/14

Development Directorate Plan 2014/15

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (Report No: DV024-F), which presented the final edit of the Development Directorate Plan for 2014/15.

The Director of Development Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting again the areas of the Directorate which came under the remit of the Committee. The recent governance review meant that some changes were now required, and this would be updated in due course.

Members noted that the Community Planning and Development team were currently working with the Shetland Partnership and were helping to promote attendance at meetings and producing reports for the agenda, ensuring that any items of significance were considered. More work was being carried out with regard to community engagement, and the transfer of assets to community use was a good example of work that had been carried out to date.

In response to a query, the Director of Development Services said that he would check to ensure that current bus timetables did align with Shetland College hours, as he understood that this was something that had been addressed when transport requirements were being considered.

It was pointed out that problems had been experienced regarding the asset transfer of Quarff School, and it was felt that there required to be more communication across Council departments.

On the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Cleaver, the Council approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** this version of the Plan for further sharing with partners, staff and the community.

15/14

Committee Business Programme 2014/15

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader - Administration (Report No: GL-07-14-F), which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee over the remaining quarters of the current financial year to 31 March 2015 and on the motion of Mr Smith, seconded by Mr Robinson, approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee noted its business planned for the remaining quarters of the current financial year up to 31 March 2015.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am.

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Chair