



MINUTES

B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 9 June 2014 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	R MacKay
M Tregonning	

Also:

S Coutts	R Henderson
C Smith	T Smith
A Wishart	

Apologies:

None

In Attendance:

M Boden, Chief Executive
H Budge, Director of Children's Services
M Craigie, Executive Manager – Transport Planning
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement
J Gray, Executive Manager – Finance
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law
R Sinclair, Executive Manager – Capital Programme
S Thompson, Executive Manager - Schools
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
S Laurenson, Consultant Adviser
E Park, Transport Strategy Officer
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

None

Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on (i) 5 March on the motion of Mr G Smith, seconded by Mr Cleaver and (ii) 26 May 2014, on the motion of Mr G Smith, seconded by Mr Fox.

16/14 Proposed Discontinuation of Secondary Three and Secondary Four Education at Sandwick Junior High School

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-12-14-F), which presented the Consultation Report on the proposed discontinuation of Secondary 3 and Secondary 4 education at Sandwick Junior High School (JHS).

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report, thanking all those who had taken time to participate in the consultation exercise. She confirmed that the process had followed the statutory requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, and that the consultation period had run from 13 February to 28 March 2014. Education Scotland had prepared a report on the educational aspects of the Proposal, having received a copy of the proposal paper, all relevant written responses and a summary of the oral responses.

She advised that an error had been pointed out on page 18 and in Section 22.22 of the conclusion section of the Consultation Report, where it should read that the figure that disagreed with the proposal was 78.16% rather than 80.2%. The covering report for the Committee, Executive Summary and the online version of the Report had all been corrected when this error was discovered.

She went on to say that the majority of respondents had disagreed with the proposal, with only five responses agreeing with it. The concerns expressed included travelling distance and times, transport costs, quality of education, child safety, out of school activities, class sizes, community concerns, transition issues, relationships/friends and family life, school capacity, condition of building, staffing implications/employment issues, timescale of programme, democratic/decision making process, centralisation, finance, untested model of provision, environmental issues, equality of provision, removal of choice and learning resources. Detailed responses to each of these areas of concern were set out in the report, with pupil and staff queries and concerns set out separately from other responses.

Education Scotland had raised a number of relevant points which were included in the report, and she drew Members' attention to two of these. Firstly, there was a view that the Council had not set out a convincing case that the discontinuation of S3 and S4 was the most reasonable and viable option. Secondly, Education Scotland had stated that "the Council has made a clear case that for reasons of financial sustainability and the need to develop a coherent senior phase for young people which meets their diverse needs and aspirations, the current arrangement of providing education for the S1 to S4 stages at Sandwick Junior High School is neither viable nor in the best interests of children and young people".

Consultees and Education Scotland had expressed concern at the timing of the transition happening prior to the new Anderson High School (AHS) opening, which would necessitate two transitions for pupils from Sandwick JHS. She had responded to these concerns by recommending that changes do not take place

until August 2016, accepting that this was something that would require financial consideration in the meantime.

A number of things had changed since the beginning of the year in relation to secondary education and, importantly, the first tranche of S4 pupils had now been through the N4 and N5 qualifications. As the weekend's event had shown, a large number of people across Shetland cared deeply about education. The Curriculum for Education (CfE) in secondary education was bringing changes, and she was very aware that parents and pupils were being asked to respond to expected changes that were perhaps not yet fully apparent to everyone. She was pleased to confirm that the Shetland Learning Partnership Project was now up and running, and plans were well advanced to offer a wide range of opportunities for Senior Phase pupils, both vocational as well as academic. For example, from next summer there would be the opportunity, on a pilot basis, for some pupils to undertake a part-time HNC course at College whilst at either of the High Schools.

She concluded by saying that it was her professional duty to point out that she remained convinced that S1 to S6 schools offer the best secondary education opportunities for young people, and were the best fit with CfE. Shetland's model of secondary education was no longer fit for purpose, and the Shetland Learning Partnership was predicated on the Senior Phase being delivered in two High Schools. Given the geography of Shetland, there would always be a need for a transition point for some pupils at some point during their secondary education. She could not recommend to the Committee that the current arrangements, where pupils move school in the midst of their Senior Phase, were wise. Given that the only other option explored for Sandwick was to change to an S1 to S2 department, that was what was being recommended to the Committee. She advised that she was doing so with some reluctance because she knew from the feedback received that it was not a popular choice and, significantly, she believed that pupils should be able to attend an S1 to S6 school. If that was not possible geographically, pupils should at least have an intact Senior Phase and, if possible, no disruption to their Broad General Education which would take them up to the end of S3. Nevertheless, a transition at the end of S2 was better than a transition at the end of S4, and given that these were the only two options in the report, she had made the recommendation for a change to S1 to S2.

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

- Education Scotland had, in their report, stated that "it is clear from the financial situation and, in order to continue the principles and vision of Curriculum for Excellence, that there is a need for change in the way that education is organised in the Shetland Islands" and that "young people would benefit from the range of flexible learning pathways better if they had continuous experience of their senior phase from S4 to S6". Education Scotland was the main external scrutiny body that carried out inspections in schools. They had not visited secondary schools recently due to their role with regard to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, but they would inspect secondary schools again, and it was important to take account of their views and to be able to justify the way in which education was being delivered locally.
- The Education Scotland report was significant with regard to how the local authority should deliver education. Because the earlier decision of the Council

had been to look at only S1-S2 or S1-S4, these were the only options that could be included in the recommendations.

- The response to issues raised regarding the quality of education was outlined from page 52 in the Consultation Report. There were a number of changes taking place as a result of the CfE, and the new model took into account knowledge and understanding, qualifications, vocational pathways and work experience, rather than just academic qualifications. There were a number of developments that would take place through the Shetland Learning Partnership that would develop this model.
- The Shetland Learning Partnership would take a couple of years to develop fully. As it progressed, it would make the Senior Phase more flexible than it was at the moment.
- Both the S1-S4 model and S1-S2 model did not fit best with the CfE. The Broad General Education phase ended at S3. The CfE model was based on S1-S6 schools so it assumed that there would be progression through the stages rather than a transition, but it was recognised that there would be a transition point in some areas due to their geography.
- As pupils progressed through the CfE, they would narrow their choices in terms of subjects, and would usually decide at the end of S3 which subjects they were particularly interested in. It was hoped that all pupils would undertake N4 and N5 qualifications, and it would also be possible for pupils to undertake Highers over two years rather than one. All Scotland's universities had issued statements that indicated that they would accept Highers that had been completed in this timescale.
- Work was being undertaken in all secondary schools to ensure that there would be a common transition point following S3 for all pupils, and that any learning happening through the Broad General Education phase would be relevant to this.
- All consultation reports prepared by Children's Services had included a proposed date followed by a caveat stating "or as soon as possible thereafter". This was because Scottish Ministers had the power to call in the decision of the Council, and there was no set time for them to call in decisions.
- It was not necessarily the case that pupils would always transfer at the end of a school year. In the past, parents had expressed concern regarding the proposed transfer of pupils of a primary school at the end of the second term. In response to these concerns, it had been agreed to move the pupils at the end of the school year.
- Inspectors did attend public consultation meetings when they could, and went into schools to speak to pupils, parents and staff. The District Inspector was aware of the content of this report, and supported what Education Scotland had said in the report.
- A report examining the disparity in education costs between Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles was being prepared, and would be presented to Members.

Ms Wishart said that she had had a number of discussions with people regarding the viability of S1-S2 and S1-4 schools. It was important to take account Education Scotland's views that the current JHS system in Shetland was neither viable nor in the best interests of the young people. She therefore moved that the Director of Children's Services be asked to reconsider the way ahead within the Strategy for

Education in Shetland and come forward with a proposal for consultation on Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 and closure for each of the Junior High Schools - Sandwick, Aith, Mid Yell, Baltasound and Whalsay - and to bring back a report to the Committee and Council before the recess which includes a revised timetable.

She stressed that this revised timetable would not alter transition dates, and that it had been recommended in the report that there should be no transitions before the new AHS was built.

Mr G Smith seconded.

During the discussion that followed, members of the Committee said that they felt the motion on the table was the appropriate way to proceed, and they highlighted the importance of the contribution from Education Scotland. They noted it had been very clear that the community and teaching staff had rejected the S1-S2 model, and that Education Scotland had stated that S1-S4 model was no longer viable as it was not in line with the ethos of the CfE. However communities had also rejected the idea of closing their junior high schools, and the march at the weekend had illustrated the support for education in rural areas.

It was noted that the options in the report presented today were as a result of an earlier decision of the Council, but that the contribution from Education Scotland should not have come as a surprise as the CfE had always leant towards two phases from S1-S3 and S4-S6. It was important for the Council to consolidate its resources to continue to deliver high quality opportunities for young people, and to look closely at S1-S3 education to see if the Council could provide the level of resources to equip schools to deliver these opportunities. It was questioned if the Council could achieve this strategy within the constraints of the medium-term financial plan, and suggested that wording to that effect should be added to the motion so that Members were fully informed of the financial parameters.

The Chair advised that the report being prepared to be presented to Members would contain the financial information required, and it was pointed out that the Council would still have to look for efficiency savings in future years.

The Chair asked if the decision was unanimous, and there was no dissent.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that Shetland Islands Council resolve that the Director of Children's Services be asked to reconsider the way ahead within the Strategy for Education in Shetland and come forward with a proposal for consultation on Secondary 1 to Secondary 3 and closure for each of the Junior High Schools - Sandwick, Aith, Mid Yell, Baltasound and Whalsay - and to bring back a report to the Committee and Council before the recess which includes a revised timetable.

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 Fox seconded.

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

17/14

New Anderson High School – Client Advisor

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising Members of a change to the recommendation in the report.

After some further discussion, Ms Wishart moved that the Education and Families Committee approve the recommendation in the report, subject to the amendment advised by the Director of Children's Services.

Mr Robertson seconded.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation in the report, subject to the amendment advised at the meeting.

18/14

Anderson High School Consultancy Services

The Committee considered a report by Executive Manager – Capital Programme.

The Executive Manager – Capital Programme summarised the main terms of the report, and responded to queries from Members.

After some further discussion, Members approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.10am

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Chair