



## **MINUTES**

## **A&B - Public**

**Education and Families Committee  
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick  
Wednesday 1 October 2014 at 10.00am**

### **Present:**

#### Councillors:

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

#### Religious Representatives:

R MacKay

### **Apologies:**

T Macintyre	F Robertson
M Tregonning	

### **In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director of Children's Services  
H Leslie, Executive Manager – Children and Families/Chief Social Work Officer  
M Nicolson, Executive Manager – Children's Resources  
K Johnston, Solicitor  
B Kerr, 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

### **Minutes**

The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on (i) 9 June 2014, on the motion of Mr Smith, seconded by Mr Sandison, (ii) 1 July 2014, on the motion of Mr Smith, seconded by Mr Sandison, (iii) 18 August 2014, on the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Smith, and (iv) 21 August 2014, on the motion of Mr Sandison, seconded by Mr Smith.

31/14

### **Annual Report from Chief Social Work Officer**

The Committee considered a report by the Chief Social Work Officer (Report No: CS-23-14-F) introducing the seventh Annual Report which brought together the

range of duties pertaining to the Council's Social Work function over the reporting period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014.

The Chief Social Work Officer (CSWO) summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the main aspect of her role was the management of risk. The protection of children from harm was the highest priority, and there had been a significant increase in referrals since April this year. Every child on the Child Protection Register had a named key worker, a protection plan which was monitored, and post-protection plans in place. Due to the confidential nature of the work involved, successes and achievements could not always be celebrated publically. She went on to speak about successful working relationships with other agencies, and successful working practices and approaches to service delivery. She highlighted in particular the implementation of the new model for community justice, saying that there would be challenges ahead with the transition to the new model whilst maintaining the funding to provide this valuable service.

She highlighted to Members a number of issues pertaining to workforce development and the delivery of social work services. Registration requirements meant that there was a risk that services could fail to be delivered if these requirements were not met. Recruitment, retention and workforce development continued to be a challenge, particularly given the buoyant economy locally, and it was hoped that the development of the Council's Workforce Strategy would help address the issues that had been identified. In-house learning had been developed in order to try and reduce the cost of delivering training.

She pointed out that the future format of the report would be changing in line with Scottish Government guidance. However she was of the view that if it was followed prescriptively, it would omit areas which were local and unique to Shetland, and she had tried to include this in the report. She concluded by saying that the delivery of social work services could be challenging, and this continued to be the case in a changing economic climate.

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

- Alcohol and substance misuse featured highly in the cases referred, and this tended to go hand-in-hand with emotional abuse.
- The Council was currently developing a Workforce Strategy, in consultation with representatives from all departments, which would look at some of the problems currently being experienced across the Council. Succession planning was important as there was a limited workforce pool in Shetland, and social work services were challenging to deliver.
- There was a need to attract more people to social work positions, and the reduction in the training budget may be one of the factors affecting retention. The upskilling of staff already in positions would need to take priority in order to maintain service delivery. The salaries paid to social workers locally, which were the third lowest in Scotland, were as a result of the Single Status exercise and other local authorities had had to take steps to address this issue. Human Resources were currently looking at comparative figures with other local authorities.

- The Council's medium-term financial plan was committed to protecting services for the most vulnerable.

The Committee stated that it was awaiting the development of the Workforce Strategy with interest, and would continue to monitor the situation.

Members commended the report, particularly in terms of the inspection results received given the current financial constraints.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee noted the seventh Annual Report from the Chief Social Work Officer and noted the format for future Chief Social Work Officer Annual Reports.

*(Mr Cleaver attended the meeting during the following discussion)*

32/14

**Shetland Child Protection Committee: Annual Report and Business Plan**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (Report No: CS-24-14-F) which presented details of the work of Shetland Child Protection Committee for the period April 2013 to March 2014.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the key achievements over the year and pointing out that an inspection, focusing on child protection, would take place from January to March next year. She went on to say that the Council continued to provide comprehensive training to large numbers of staff, and this also linked in with the third sector. A new website had also been developed, and this had received a large number of 'hits'.

On the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Stout, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Annual Report and Business Plan, as part of its scrutiny role under the approved Planning and Performance Management Framework.

33/14

**Shetland's Strategy for Looked After Children 2014-2019**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources (Report No: CS-25-14-F) which presented Shetland's Looked After Children Strategy

The Executive Manager – Children's Resources summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the purpose of the Strategy was to enable the Council to realise its vision for looked after children – to provide them with the same opportunities to succeed as their non-looked after peers. The numbers of looked after children in Shetland tended to remain constant - the main difference from the rest of Scotland being that significant numbers of looked after children in Shetland were looked after at home.

She outlined the six priorities for Shetland referred to in paragraph 3.8 of the report, highlighting that corporate parenting was one of these key priorities and a seminar was being planned for Members in early 2015. Specific targets for 2014/15 were highlighted in the action plan and progress was underway and being monitored by

the Looked After Children strategy group. Progress would be reported to the Committee in future via the CSWO annual report.

The Executive Manager – Children’s Resources then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- A lot of data was collected within services for submission to the Scottish Government. It was intended to have a central point so that this data could be fed into one place. This would also make it easier to observe any patterns that may be emerging.
- Securing permanency was a national priority, and it was aimed to secure permanence arrangements within six months. Work had already been carried out in conjunction with CELCIS to ensure that there was a good quality assurance process in place.
- It had been reported nationally that looked after children who were looked after at home did not have as successful outcomes. It was felt that this was not the case locally, and more work was going to be done to look at this data and address the gaps, if it became apparent that there were any.
- Promoting participation was seen as a key priority, and it was important that the views of looked after children and young people were heard, particularly when making significant decisions relating to them. Documentation was being improved, and an ‘app’ was being developed to assist young people to share their views. The ‘Champions Board’ had been a successful initiative nationally, and a group was currently working on this.
- Looked after children were vulnerable in terms of poorer health outcomes, both physical and emotional. This tended to be as a result of their early experiences of family life. Progress had been made locally as a result of working being carried out in conjunction with health services to find different ways of ensuring that children who needed additional support received it.

The Chair commented that she was pleased to see that training sessions were being developed for Members and officials with regard to corporate parenting, and she hoped that all Members would participate as it was vitally important to give children the best possible chances in life.

On the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Robinson, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve to adopt Shetland’s Strategy for Looked After Children by approving the document including the priorities and action plan.

The meeting concluded at 10.40am.

Chair