



MINUTES

A&B - Public

**Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Tuesday 20 January 2015 at 11.00am**

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also:

R Henderson	T Smith
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Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	R MacKay
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M Tregonning

Apologies:

None

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement
M Nicolson, Executive Manager – Children’s Resources
J Riise, Executive Manager – Governance and Law
R Calder, Quality Improvement Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
B Kerr, Communications Officer
J Thomason, Management Accountant
F Thomson, Management Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Also:

M Hendrikson, HMI Scotland
S Pollock, Audit Scotland
K Whyte, Audit Scotland

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 meeting held on 1 October 2014 on the motion of Mr Robinson, seconded by Mr Stout.

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2014 on the motion of Mr G Smith, seconded by Mr Robertson.

The Committee approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2014 on the motion of Mr G Smith, seconded by Mr Robertson.

4 November 2014

Except as undernoted, the Committee approved the minutes of the above meeting on the motion of Mr Robertson, seconded by Mrs MacKay.

Sederunt:

Mr Tregonning pointed out that he had been listed as a Councillor rather than a Religious Representative.

01/15 Accounts Commission Report: Audit Scotland Report – School Education

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-06-15-F) which presented findings from the Accounts Commission Report and provided an opportunity to discuss these with representatives from the Accounts Commission present at the meeting.

Ms Pollock and Ms Whyte, Audit Scotland, gave a PowerPoint presentation to the Committee which outlined the findings from their "School Education" report which had been prepared in June 2014.

Ms Pollock advised that it was the first time Audit Scotland had looked at education for a number of years but that given the significant changes over the last decade, it had been felt that it was now an appropriate time to consider it. She outlined the aims and objectives of the study, which had looked at how efficiently and effectively resources were being used in primary and secondary education across Scotland.

Ms Whyte then spoke about attainment levels, highlighting that there were vast differences both across the country and within Councils, with deprivation remaining a significant factor. The picture in Shetland was positive. Attainment continued to remain higher than the national average and in the top-performing third across the country, but it could continue to improve. Performance was also wide-ranging across authorities, with the highest-performing authorities increasing attainment at a greater rate than the lower-performing ones. The lower performing ones had improved but not at the same rate, so that gap had widened.

In terms of spending on education, Shetland – in common with other areas - spent the largest proportion of its budget on employee costs. Shetland had one of the lowest decreases in school expenditure, so it was important for the Council to continue to benchmark against other local authorities. How reduction in expenditure had been achieved nationally had been explored, and reduction in staffing was a key area. Other opportunities to yield efficiencies had been taken advantage of, such as changes to teachers' terms and conditions. Making efficiency savings remained a challenge for Councils, and there were a number of

specific challenges which had arisen such as pressures in meeting the requirements of ASN pupils, public and political opposition to school closures, and pressures in maintaining and upgrading school estates. These were additional challenges on top of the current financial climate, so Councils would have to give consideration to using resources in a targeted manner - bearing in mind the potential impact on attainment - whilst ensuring the best value for money and best outcomes. The next steps for Audit Scotland would be to report and share its findings, identify new audits required, attend educational events, and to produce a further impact report.

Ms Pollock and Ms White then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- The figures in the report were based on actual data, and there had been no weighting to allow for the impact of fluctuations where small class numbers were involved.
- The report took account of pupils' time in school and did not take account of pathways and outcomes following school, but this was something that could be looked at in future. Data was available in relation to pupils' destinations for the first six months after leaving school.
- The figures relating to performance and deprivation had not been explored further, and it would be for local authorities to explore performance of schools affected by different levels of deprivation.
- There were no national measures for primary performance, but it would be important to try and understand what was happening at primary level. Some areas did standardised testing, but there could be no like for like comparison at the moment as all areas were doing things differently. The measures used as part of the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) were centred on consolidating learning, but there were wider achievements that could be explored and opportunities for primary schools to participate in structured programmes and awards.
- It could be argued that high levels of attainment in secondary school resulted from the achievements of primary schools. However there was a drop nationally in terms of performance between primary school and secondary school.
- The Audit Commission had worked closely with Education Scotland in preparing the report and since its publication. But it was important that the audit was carried out independently, so Education Scotland was not involved in the actual audit.
- There were differences between local authorities regarding how things were measured, and a lot of work had been done to improve consistency between Councils. This would have to be revisited when new performance measures were introduced, and Education Scotland would be looking at driving consistency. Benchmarking against other local authorities was important, but it was important to compare like with like.

- It was challenging for local authorities to continue to maintain standards and provision in the face of decreasing budgets. There was a need for a national discussion to consider whether current methods were sustainable and if a fundamental redesign of how to deliver education in Scotland was required.

Concern was expressed that the identification of Baltasound Junior High School in relation to deprivation may lead to the identification of pupils given the small number of pupils involved.

Ms Whyte advised that Baltasound had been identified in the presentation only, and not the report. There had been some discussion in relation to this when the report had been prepared, and some schools had been excluded in certain areas because of the low pupil numbers involved. However the information available was used by the Government and was publicly available, and it had been felt that it provided a useful illustration.

It was suggested that it would be useful to have information relating to the average percentage of Council budgets spent on primary and secondary education across the country, and Ms Whyte advised that she would arrange to supply this information to the Committee.

The Chair thanked Ms Pollock and Ms Whyte for their presentation.

Decision:

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

02/15

Strategy for Secondary Education in Shetland – Amendment to Statutory Consultation Timeline

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-04-15-F) which sought a decision regarding an amendment to the Statutory Consultation Timeline in relation to the Strategy for Secondary Education in Shetland.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement summarised the main terms of the report, outlining the decisions taken earlier by the Council in respect of the Strategy for Secondary Education and the Blueprint for Education which had led to the recommendations in the report. The consultations carried out in respect of Mid Yell Junior High School and Whalsay School Secondary Department had demonstrated that there was overwhelming opposition from rural communities to any changes in the secondary education provided, and that parents, pupils and staff remained unconvinced that proposed changes would be of benefit educationally. The feedback received demonstrated that the Shetland Learning Partnership and the new Anderson High School were not yet enough of a reality for people to put trust in. The advantage of the five-year moratorium introduced by the Scottish Government was that it would give the local authority the chance to take stock if the full proposals did not find favour, although it was important to state that Children's Services continued to believe that the Strategy for Secondary Education, which was Council policy, was the right way forward, although it was accepted that now was not the right time to engage in meaningful dialogue with communities on this. As a result, it was being requested that the Committee recommend that the current consultation processes cease at the moment, and start again at a date to be agreed. Children's Services would come forward with a revised timeline in 2017, once the Shetland Learning Partnership was operational and the new Anderson High School (AHS) was a reality, unless the financial position of the Council

changed significantly and Children's Services were required to find additional savings as part of the Medium Term Financial Plan. It was also being recommended that hostel fees should be waived for pupils from S3 to ensure that those who did wish to attend the new AHS were not disadvantaged, and this would also apply to transport costs.

In response to a query, she went on to explain that she had had the opportunity to meet with two parent councils - the others being unable to attend due to weather conditions - and the feedback received was that these proposals would bring a lot of relief to communities at this time, and provide an opportunity to start again in terms of refreshing the dialogue between Children's Services and parent councils.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement and the Director of Children's Services then responded to queries, and the Committee noted the following:

- There would continue to be challenging times ahead in terms of continuing to deliver a high quality of education against a background of decreasing budgets.
- A revised timeline for consultation would be brought forward in 2017, with the caveat that there may be a need to consider this earlier should the Council's budgetary position dramatically change and there were further budgetary constraints. Across the country, all local authorities were being asked to come forward with proposals regarding service delivery. It was important that Members were kept informed and made aware of the consequences of any possible proposals.
- It was recognised that this period of uncertainty may affect staff morale. The Local Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers was being kept up-to-date on all projects taking place, and was being asked to pass on information to all its members. Regular discussions with Head Teachers were also taking place and they were also being asked to inform staff of any developments. Children's Services staff were willing to go and talk to groups of staff, and had openly offered the Council's welfare support services to staff.

The Chair commented that Children's Services were clear about the need for young people to have their final phase of education in one place, but that it was clear that the majority of people were not ready to accept changes to the schools estate at this time. She therefore moved recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 and, in respect of recommendation 2.3, that transport fees should also be waived.

Mr G Smith seconded.

Mr Campbell moved, as an amendment, that recommendation 2.2 should instead be amended to read "That the Director of Children's Services comes forward in 2017 or later - when the Shetland Learning Partnership is operational and the new AHS is a reality - with a revised timeline for these planned statutory consultations".

However his amendment did not receive a seconder.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve:

- To cease the current statutory consultation on the options of the proposed closure of Mid Yell Junior High School Secondary Department, or the discontinuation of Secondary 4 education only, does not proceed to publish a consultation report, and that this consultation is carried out in full again at a future date to be agreed
- To cease the current statutory consultation on the options of the proposed closure of Whalsay School Secondary Department, or the discontinuation of Secondary 4 education only, does not proceed to publish a consultation report, and that this consultation is carried out in full again at a future date to be agreed
- To not commence statutory consultation on the options of the proposed closure of Baltasound Junior High School Secondary Department or the discontinuation of Secondary 4 education only, in August 2015, and that this consultation is postponed and starts at a future date to be agreed
- To not commence statutory consultation on the options of the proposed closure of Aith Junior High School Secondary Department or the discontinuation of Secondary 4 education only, in October 2015, and that this consultation is postponed and starts at a future date to be agreed
- To not commence statutory consultation on the options of the proposed closure of Sandwick Junior High School Secondary Department or the discontinuation of Secondary 4 education only, in October 2015, and that this consultation is postponed and starts at a future date to be agreed
- That the Director of Children's Services come forward in 2017 with a revised timeline for these planned statutory consultations
- That the Hall of Residence fees and transport fees should be waived from June 2015 for pupils from S3, in order to maintain the integrity of the Strategy for Secondary Education and to facilitate the Shetland Learning Partnership

(Mr Robinson left the meeting)

03/15

Secondary School Comparison Project

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-01-15-F) which presented the findings and recommendations of the School Comparison Project, and sought approve to further explore each of the recommendations.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Audit Scotland report presented earlier had been used to provide background information for the current budget context for cost per secondary pupil. At the present time there were significant financial challenges, with £3.165million savings to be found by 2020. Real progress had been made in reducing costs, with a reduction of 13% at a time when national costs had risen by 1.8%. Previously some of the information contained in the Local Finance Return had not been like for like for each area, but it was now better for benchmarking against other local authorities. The information in the report demonstrated how Shetland outperformed Orkney and the Western Isles, and was above national average in its 'family' of comparable authorities. Shetland continued to have the lowest teacher-pupil ratio, although secondary teaching staff had reduced by 21% since 2010. She went on to

say that detail regarding comparisons between schools was included in the report, but that there was difficulty in comparing attainment because of the difference in size of schools so it was not a like for like comparison. The report contained five recommendations for further exploration, and it was proposed to present further reports to the Committee in September.

The Director of Children's Services, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement and the Quality Improvement Officer then responded to queries, and the Committee noted the following:

- There were a few teachers in Shetland that had chartered teacher status, although the scheme was not operational at the moment and had never developed nationally as had been anticipated. This status did not affect teacher/pupil ratios, but did have an effect on the overall cost of the teacher population as they were paid more. Chartered teachers were not promoted posts, but it was felt that they should take on some role in assisting school development or carrying out projects.
- It was made clear in the report that the budgets were indicative, and did not go down to the level relating to the allocation of support staff across departments in junior high schools.
- Placing requests would be required for pupils wishing to move to other schools to access subjects as part of their learning programmes.
- The Shetland Learning Partnership would be looking at a common curriculum structure, and it was not anticipated that there would be a reduction in subject choice overall. However there was a need to be more flexible regarding subject choice across Shetland as a whole, and to think more broadly about how to meet learning pathways by moving across schools.
- An agreement had been in place locally since 2003 regarding management structures in schools. However the landscape and school rolls had changed since that time, so it was appropriate to consider promoted post/management in schools even though the figures locally were not that different from other areas. Since 2003 work had taken place to achieve revised management structures through natural means, and there was now a reduced promoted post structure which had assisted in achieving financial savings. However the Council was now in a position where there was a mixed picture that did not fit with the 2003 agreement, so it was appropriate to take the opportunity to restore parity and to consider how this could be best done with the CfE. It was important that this piece of work focused on the school estate as a whole, as some schools did encompass primary departments.
- It was proposed that the organisation of classes to include possible composites in S1/2 in junior high school settings was reviewed for S1/2 only, as the curriculum programme from S3 onwards was different as pupils could specialise in their chosen subjects. However this was something that could be considered for common core subjects, and would tie in with what was being considered as part of the Shetland Learning Partnership.
- Pupil numbers in the report had been updated to reflect the current position locally.

- Pupil/teacher ratio figures in the report relating to the Anderson High included ASN teachers and pupils. When further work was carried out, the position in other local authorities would be clarified in order that like for like comparisons were carried out. However it was also important to recognise that the ethos of the AHS was that ASN pupils were fully included and recognised as part of the school. There was a varied and shifting picture regarding ASN provision across Scotland. Some larger local authorities had special schools, but others educated pupils in mainstream schools.

The Committee commended the staff involved in producing such a clear and comprehensive report in a short period of time.

It was commented that the Council now had a good framework on which to move forward, and this would give time to understand what lay ahead and to establish further efficiencies. It was likely that there would require to be a more flexible approach to the delivery of education in Shetland if standards were to be maintained, and opportunities as to how to deliver subject choices in different settings would have to be explored.

It was suggested that there was a need for the Council to look across all its budgets in order to make sure it was spending money in a prioritised fashion.

On the motion of Mr G Smith, seconded by Ms Wishart, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve to:

- Note the content of Appendix A: Secondary School Comparison Project Report.
- Agree that the five recommendations as detailed below are further explored.

Recommendation 1: Set out clear priorities and actions at local authority level for improving further on Shetland's very strong overall attainment record in line with Audit Scotland's 2014 'School education' recommendations.

Recommendation 2: Carry out a review of promoted posts and management structures in Shetland's school estate.

Recommendation 3: Carry out a further review of secondary teaching posts with a view to identifying further opportunities to share teaching staff.

Recommendation 4: Review other aspects of secondary provision to make secondary education more efficient and sustainable, including:

- Examining the scale of subjects to choose from in all our schools as part of personalisation and choice in Secondary 3 and for qualifications from Secondary 4 to Secondary 6;
- The organisation of classes, including possible composites in Secondary 1 and 2 in junior high settings where pupil numbers allow, clarity on viable class-sizes in general and consider the delivery of Higher and Advanced Higher courses in the same class in Brae High School;

- The use of ICT to support online and distance learning where appropriate;
- The opportunity for young people to move to other schools to access subjects as part of their learning programmes by looking at removing transport costs and hostel fees for pupils from Secondary 3;
- Examine further the cost per pupil and pupil/teacher ratios in all of Shetland's secondary schools / departments.

Recommendation 5: Review the local authority's approaches to quality assurance in schools as part of a wider review of Children's Services, Schools and Quality Improvement Staffing.

- Agree that the Director of Children's Services will appoint a Lead Officer to take forward each of the five recommendations.
- Agree that further reports on each of the recommendations will be presented to Education and Families Committee by September 2015.

04/15

Islesburgh Out of School Care Service Inspection Report

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Children's Resources (CS-03-15-F) which presented the Islesburgh Out of School Care Service inspectorate Report August 2014 and Action Plan.

The Executive Manager – Children's Resources summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Council had agreed that such reports should be considered by the appropriate Committee. The Service had been assessed as being very good across all areas inspected, and the necessary actions had been implemented immediately after the inspection had taken place.

On the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr G Smith, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RESOLVED** to approve the Islesburgh Out of School Care Services Action Plan.

05/15

External Audit Reports – Care Inspectorate

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-02-15-F) which highlighted three recent reports from Audit Scotland.

The Executive Manager – Quality Improvement summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the Council had agreed that all external audit reports should be presented to the appropriate Committee. The services that had been inspected had received very good reports, demonstrating that high quality services continued to be provided despite the significant changes that had recently taken place. The actions raised in the inspection reports had been addressed

It was noted that the inspections were unannounced, and that the Committee could therefore be confident that standards were being maintained.

On the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr Sandison, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee considered the reports on Mossbank Primary School Wraparound Care, Sound Primary School Nursery Class and Aith Junior High School Nursery Class, noted the actions to be taken by the Schools/Quality Improvement Service, and noted the recommendations to be included, where appropriate, in the relevant School's Improvement Plan.

06/15

Integrated Children's Services Plan 2014-2017

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-05-15-F) which presented the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2014-2017.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that it set out the key priorities and key areas for the agencies involved in working to improve services.

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

- The "named person" in the Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) process was set out in legislation and that process had been set up locally, as had a planned training programme for staff. Staff trainers had been trained to provide training for all staff.
- There was an increased emphasis on early intervention as it was recognised that this was the best way forward. This had been happening in local authorities for a number of years.
- There were a number of benefits from the multi-agency approach, but consistency in terms of quality assurance with this approach was one of the areas that had been flagged up and would be monitored.

On the motion of Ms Wishart, seconded by Mr G Smith, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Council resolve to approve the Integrated Children's Services Plan 2014-2017, including the priorities and action plan to be monitored and managed by the Education and Families Committee.

The meeting concluded at 1.15pm.

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Chair