



MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 23 February 2015 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also:

R Henderson	T Smith
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Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	M Tregonning
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Apologies:

R MacKay	G Robinson
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In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children's Services
J Bedford, Executive Manager - Finance
V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development
S Brunton, Team Leader - Legal
A Tait, Solicitor
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

07/15 Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2015/15 – Projected Outturn at Quarter 3

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-007-F) which enabled monitoring of the financial performance of services within its remit.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the projected outturn position and the main projected outturn variances. With regard to the projected outturn overspend for capital, most of it related to

timing issues in relation to payments for the new Anderson High School, rather than cost overruns.

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

- The information in the report did not contain a breakdown between one-off and recurring savings, but it would be possible to provide further information in relation to this.
- Funding had been received from the Scottish Government in respect of the increased entitlement for pre-school education, and further information could be supplied to the Committee regarding the funding received and how far it would go in meeting present and future costs.
- The budget provision to part fund the CAMHS service had not been required as there had been a reduction in the part of the service – relating to young people - that the funding would have contributed towards. The service was not provided by the Council, and it would be monitored to see if it would be taken forward.
- The reference in paragraph 1.4 of the Appendix to school house maintenance related to a school house in one of the remote islands. The works had not commenced on schedule, as there had been difficulty in getting materials there due to the weather conditions.

During the discussion that followed, it was commented that it was important that information was made available, possibly via the Policy and Resources Committee, on one-off and recurring savings across the Council in order to help Members gain an understanding of how significant some of these savings were. It was noted that there were savings relating to staff vacancies across all Committees, and it was requested that an analysis was carried out to aid understanding of the impact on service delivery requirements and staffing levels. This piece of work could be led by Human Resources, and presented to the Policy and Resources Committee.

It was suggested that Council budgets should make an allowance for vacant posts and adjustments made to the budget accordingly, rather than classing vacancies as savings during the period the post remained vacant.

The Executive Manager – Finance said that this was common in some organisations, and it was something that could possibly be considered in the future in particular areas.

On the motion of Mr Sandison, seconded by Mr Campbell, the Committee approved the recommendation in the report.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee reviewed the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 3.

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-07-15-F) which summarised the activity and performance of Children's Services for Quarter 3 of 2014/15.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there had been a lot of work carried out over the last few weeks – Quarter 4 - which had an effect on the actions contained in the report. It was noted that there was a typographical error in respect of Measure CS3 – Employee Review & Development – and that the current position should instead read that 44% of reviews were recorded as complete in September 2014, rather than 2013.

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

- Up until September, the number of looked-after children with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) had been above target. Staff who worked with IEPs on a regular basis were working to ensure that all staff were aware of the process and requirements.
- Two new social workers had just started working in the Children and Families team, so it should be possible to meet the target again in relation to the number of reports presented to the Reporter within timescale.
- Local produce was on the menu as often as possible for school meals. Authority-wide menus were now in operation, and consideration was being given as to how to take this forward.
- Relevant information that had been gleaned during the cost comparison project would be included in the next report, as the current one only related to activity that had taken place in Quarter 3.
- It could be difficult to meet the target in respect of employee review and development interviews as schools staff worked in academic years, and there were a number of part-time, temporary and staff on leave who had not been working during the required reporting period. This was going to be reviewed to see if the reporting period could be better matched, as it would never be possible to achieve the target otherwise.
- There were an increasing number of referrals to the Children and Families Social Work department and additional staff had been required to assist the team. These staff had just commenced their duties, so there should be an improvement in the indicators over the next few quarters.
- Work was ongoing to look at how to better utilise Children's Resources respite staff across Shetland. A review of residential resources had been carried out, and a review of social work was currently ongoing, and it was hoped to hold a seminar in March to provide further information for Members.
- Attendance rates remained above the national average, and robust procedures were in place regarding attendance. There was also a policy in place regarding exclusion. There were particular reasons for exclusion in respect of individual children, and support packages could be put in.

- There was a close working relationship with Social Work, so it was likely that any change in family circumstances which would prevent families from participating in a cashless system in respect of school meals would be communicated to schools to make sure this was taken into account. Cashless catering was being explored closely before being implemented, and it was appreciated that there may be people that would find this type of system difficult. There had not been a big increase in uptake of school meals following the increased entitlement for P1-3 children
- Opportunities for increasing publicity in respect of clothing grants, education maintenance allowances and bursaries were identified and were being highlighted to social work staff working with young people.
- Because more early intervention was taking place with young people, there were not as many who fell into the category of requiring activity agreements. Many were receiving suitable opportunities as they progressed through school and this was something that was also being developed through the Shetland Learning Partnership. The wording in relation to the performance indicator could be improved to illustrate this was the case.

It was suggested that the information contained in the performance reports for all Committees was descriptive rather than analytical, and that there was a need to consider the value of the information that was reported and its impact on the Corporate Plan. This was an issue that the Policy and Resources Committee may want to consider. It was also pointed out that each Committee had failed to meet its employee review and development interview targets, and that there was a need for the Council to ensure that the training and development needs that arose from these interviews were reflected in the Council's training plan.

It was requested that further information be supplied with regard to attendance figures nationally, particularly in respect of the breakdown between rural and urban areas. It was also requested that information be supplied in respect of secondary teacher/pupil ratios, given the recent initiative by the Scottish Government in respect of teacher numbers. The Director of Children's Services advised that she would arrange to supply a briefing paper to Members, and that this would also include more up-to-date information in respect of exclusion figures.

Concern was expressed regarding the use of electronic application forms for Education Maintenance Allowances and bursaries, as this may preclude people from applying because of access issues.

The Director of Children's Services advised that there would be an opportunity to apply via other formats, but that it was hoped to get more electronic systems in place. Consideration would be given to supporting people who found it difficult to access electronic systems.

Decision:

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

09/15

Development Services Directorate Performance Report 9 Month/3rd Quarter 2014/15

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-07-15-F) which summarised the activity and performance of the Development Services Directorate for the reporting period.

The Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting the areas which came under the remit of the Committee.

It was requested that the information relating to temporary accommodation should be broken down further in order to analyse how many children and families were involved.

It was noted that it had been indicated that high levels of employment locally was the reason for the reduction in Shetland College student enrolments, and it was questioned if research had been undertaken to arrive at this conclusion. The Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development advised that she would ask the College to pass on any information that had led them to arrive at this conclusion.

It was commented that employers had always found Train Shetland responsive to training requirements but, for a long period, Train Shetland had been an underused resource locally. It was hoped that the appointment of a Business Development Manager would enable Train Shetland to continue to be responsive to local training needs.

It was noted that the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning had indicated that she did not favour any merging of academic partners of the UHI into the UHI at this time.

Decision:

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

10/15

Education and Families Committee Business Programme 2015/16

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader – Administration (GL-03-15-F) which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee for the financial year to 31 March 2016.

It was noted that information relating to the financial closure of the new AHS project would be presented to the Policy and Resources Committee prior to a Council decision.

The Director of Children's Services advised that it would be for the Chair and Vice Chair to consider whether the report should be presented to the Committee in the first instance, but that authority in respect of this matter was not delegated to the Committee. A stakeholder meeting would be held regarding the cost plan that would be prepared prior to financial closure.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee noted its business planned for the financial year to 31 March 2016.

The meeting concluded at 11.15am.

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Chair

