



## **MINUTES**

## **A&B - Public**

**Education and Families Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Monday 25 May 2015 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
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### **Apologies:**

M Tregonning

### **In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director – Children's Services  
J Belford, Executive Manager – Finance  
C McIntyre, Executive Manager - Audit, Risk & Improvement  
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer  
K Adam, Solicitor  
T Coutts, Business Development and Training Manager  
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

#### **18/15      Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2014/15 – Draft Outturn at Quarter 4**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Finance (F-022-F) which noted the financial performance of the services within its remit.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting that the outturn position was an underspend of £1.193 on revenue and an overspend of £171,000 on capital. Approval was being sought to carry forward some of the underspend to fulfil ongoing work.

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

- A grant of £277,000 had been received from the Scottish Government in order for the Council to meet its requirements in respect of the increase in nursery entitlement. Whilst it had gone through the Children's Services budget as an overspend, this related to the delivery of the service itself. It was understood that there was a small amount left as a contingency and there was no adverse effect on the Council budgets.
- It had been agreed last year that supply to cover sickness for primary teaching staff would be removed from the directorate budget and placed in the contingency budget. It was currently showing as an overspend as the Directorate did not hold that budget, and would have to apply to get this contingency back. Management of contingency budgets was something that would be looked at over the coming year, so that it did not show up as a mismatch with directorate budgets.
- There had not been a reduction in the overall training offered, but it was the case that some training had not been undertaken as there was a reduction in the availability of staff to undertake it.
- The building maintenance budget was well-managed, and there was a building maintenance plan across the school estate. It was showing an underspend as it was sometimes the case that works could not happen as planned – on remote islands if there were weather delays, for example – and some invoices had not been received in the outturn period. The budget would be reprofiled in order to carry out works required.
- There were a number of reasons why there had been a reduction in fostering, adoption and clothing allowance budgets, and a reduction in spending on support for young people leaving care. These cases were all looked at individually, and different circumstances taken into account. The budgets were set a year in advance and the circumstances therefore could change during the year. It was hoped to expand the fostering and adoption service, so this budget would be used in future.
- Early retirement and voluntary redundancy costs sat in the directorate budgets, but it had been agreed that some of these costs could be met from the contingencies budget. The figures in the report illustrated that these costs could not be met fully from the contingency budget, and would therefore fall on the Directorate. Requests for early retirement/voluntary redundancy were not permitted unless they met the criteria in the Council's policy

It was commented that consideration should be given to including the identification of one-off and recurring savings in these reports to all committees, and that the commentary should also include an indication of effects on service levels as a result of underspends - such as whether staff vacancies have impacted on the level of service that was delivered.

The Executive Manager – Finance said that this was something that could be considered. He understood that the Corporate Management Team were currently looking at a way of finding a consistent approach to defining recurrent and non-

recurrent savings, and this would be taken account of in the way the information was reported in the first quarter.

It was suggested that further consideration should be given to increasing the contingency required for early retirement/voluntary redundancies, rather than having the costs that could not be met falling on directorate budgets.

In response to a query as to whether contingencies could be met by drawing on reserves, the Executive Manager – Finance advised that this would not be the first port of call in terms of balancing budgets. The starting point would have to be the Council's overall forecasted position and if there were any major items outwith this, it would have to be brought back to Members for decision.

On the motion of Mr Robertson, seconded by Mr Campbell, the Committee approved the recommendations in the report.

**Decision:**

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

- Note the Management Accounts showing the draft outturn position; and
- Note the proposed budget carry-forwards which will be included in the overall Draft Outturn Report to be presented for approval at Policy and Resources Committee on 27 May 2015.

19/15

**Development Services Directorate – Performance Overview**

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

The Business and Development Manager outlined the areas of the report that came under the remit of the Committee, which were in relation to Shetland College and Train Shetland. He highlighted that there had been a general reduction in training across the board, which was perhaps a reflection of the current economic situation and a reduction in Council training. Shetland College enrolments were also slightly down and, again, this could be seen as a reflection of current economic circumstances as more people were moving directly into employment.

The Business and Development Manager then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- It was possible that the WSUMS target could be met as there was currently work ongoing within Shetland College and the NAFC to ascertain if there was activity currently being delivered which would count towards the target.
- Skills Development Scotland (SDS) would have further information available relating to Modern Apprentices in Shetland which were not included in Shetland College and NAFC totals. It should also be possible to capture information as to the age profile of Modern Apprentices and the achievement rates. Funding from SDS for Modern Apprentices was based on a sliding scale, so this was an added complication relating to the older age group of Modern Apprentices.

- In general, the Council used an online training system – Brightwave – to meet its corporate and policy training requirements. More practical training requirements would be met by outside providers.
- The buoyant economy at the moment affected training as many firms were extremely busy, and could not release staff for training. It was a very fine line however, as during periods of economic downturn firms could not afford to send staff for training.
- The actual SIC income to Train Shetland was around £30,000. £50,000 had been budgeted for, so there had been an impact on business. It was intended to work closely with Human Resources in future on the workforce development plan, with a view to getting more Council business through Train Shetland.

It was requested that future reports of this nature clearly highlight the areas of the Development Service that came under the remit of each Committee, so that it was clear which areas of the Plan the Committee should be commenting on.

It was commented that there was a recurrent theme that the reduced business from the Council was affecting Train Shetland and Shetland College. Figures had shown that there was a significant underspend in the Council's training budget, and much of the training required by Council staff was available through Train Shetland, Shetland College and the UHI. It was suggested that if the Council was seeking to make the College sustainable, it should be ensuring that the first port of call for its training requirements was Train Shetland/Shetland College wherever possible, rather than external providers.

#### **Decision:**

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

20/15

#### **Children's Services Performance Report: 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2014/15**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-13-15-F) which summarised the activity and performance of the Children's Services Directorate for Quarter 4 of 2014/15.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there was an error in paragraph 3.4 of the report and it should instead read that there were 21 key actions rated as green, and two actions rated as amber. With regard to the amber key actions, it was hoped to achieve financial closure on the new AHS project at the end of June or early July. Work on the Fraser Park had been delayed due to weather and should be completed by June. The red action in respect of the Schools Reconfiguration Project would be the subject of a report presented to the Council next week.

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

- It had been reported nationally that there was a decline in literacy and numeracy standards, but the survey that had taken place did not provide data relating to individual areas. Checks were carried out on the standards in some schools across Shetland and it was also one of the workstreams in the schools comparison project, so information would be coming back from schools.

Attention was being given nationally as to how standards could be better monitored.

- Attendance rates were below the national average, and this was something that would be closely monitored to find out the reasons behind it. It was sometimes due to long-term illness or personal circumstances, but it was something the Quality Improvement Officers monitored closely and discussed with individual schools.
- The take-up of free school meals remained low, and this had remained the case following the introduction of free school meals for Primaries 1-3. A review was currently being carried out, and information would be presented to Members when this was complete.
- The exclusion policy would require to be reviewed as a result of the ASN review because there were categories in the policy that would relate to young people with additional support needs.
- Any potential correlation between the uptake of Education Maintenance Allowance and the decrease in full-time FE students was something that had not been explored yet, but could be in future.
- Further information would be provided to Members in relation to Performance Measure SQ6 and the reduction in March 2014.
- Consideration would be given to revising the target in relation to Performance Measure SL2, given that the hostel was now open all year.

A Member commented that concern had been expressed by some members of the Scalloway community that young people were climbing the fence to get into the Fraser Park. This may be dangerous as it was a high fence, so hopefully completion of this project could be dealt with as a priority.

The Director of Children's Services advised that she would report this back to those involved, but the intention was to complete this project in June.

It was pointed out that educational attainment rates remained consistently above the national average. Tribute was paid to officers and staff in Children's Services, and the Council as a whole, in successfully managing to deliver services against a background of reducing budgets.

It was noted that there would be challenging times ahead, and commented that the Council should ensure that it continued to put as much of its budget as it could afford into education, and continue to impress on the Scottish Government the additional costs pertaining to the delivery of education in Shetland. Some measures of resource allocation did not take this into account.

**Decision:**

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

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader - Administration (GL-13-15-F), which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee over the remaining quarters of the current financial year to 31 March 2016.

The Committee noted the report.

**Decision:**

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

The meeting concluded at 11.00am.

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Chair