



MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 23 November 2015 at 10am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also:

A Cooper

Religious Representatives:

R MacKay	M Tregonning
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Apologies:

T Macintyre

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director of Children's Services
J Belford, Executive Manager – Finance
M Nicolson, Chief Social Work Officer/Executive Manager – Children and Families
V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development
R Sinclair, Executive Manager – Capital Programme
T Coutts, Business Development and Training Manager
J MacLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
P Sutherland, Solicitor
B Kerr, Communications Officer
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Ms Wishart, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Capital Programme (CPS-22-15-F) which presented a proposal to refurbish the old Library building at Hillhead, Lerwick, which would allow the Library to consolidate their operations in a single building.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme advised Members on the Committee's remit in regard to the recommendation in the report, being to note the report, and make comment on any operational aspects of the proposals.

During the discussion, some Members sought further detail on the proposed £100k revenue savings to the Library Service as reported at Section 5 of the Appendix, and a breakdown of the figure was requested. The Executive Manager – Capital Programme confirmed that he would provide the information in a briefing note to Members. A Member made reference to the recent approval of the Medium Term Financial Plan, where he questioned the impact on this project of the 3.3% recurring savings in future years.

A Member questioned whether the proposed savings as reported at Section 5 could be real savings to the Council, with the proposal that another Council service would relocate to the vacated St Ringans building. The Executive Manager – Capital Programme confirmed the intention that another Service would move to St Ringans. The £100k would be a saving to the Library Service as a result of vacating St Ringans and was provided in terms of comparing options but it was not a saving to the Council. He advised that any savings would be achieved through other properties being vacated.

In response to questions, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme advised that in developing this report, liaison has taken place with the Library Service on the requirements for the library, where the proposals as presented will bring efficiencies. The Director of Children's Services explained that the proposals would provide a better service as there would be improved interaction between the actual library and the IT/learning centre being in one building.

A Member sought assurance on the necessity to relocate the Library Service as proposed, given the 3.3% ongoing cuts to Council budgets. The Director of Children's Services said that she could appreciate the concerns, with the library service target to achieve approximately £124k savings between 2016/17 to 2020/21.

A Member sought assurance that the £900k budget as estimated would include all the works required to refurbish the old library building. The Executive Manager – Capital Programme explained that the faults as listed originate from the feasibility study undertaken in 2009. He gave assurance that costings have been well developed with a reasonable degree of confidence, and he confirmed that sufficient detailed work had been undertaken. In response to a question, it was confirmed that the external funding that may be available to support elements of the works was an interest free arrangement. In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme advised that with any major refurbishment project, he would anticipate an additional 30 to 50 years life extension to the property. The Executive Manager confirmed that he would include this information in his briefing note to Members.

In response to a question regarding disabled access provision within the old Library, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme confirmed that the lift in the building would either be updated or replaced as necessary to ensure full compliance with Building Standards Disabled Access requirements.

In response to questions, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme reported on the benefits that would be achieved by relocating the Bruce Family Centre to the more convenient location of St Ringans. He advised on the Council's building maintenance obligations at the Bruce Hostel and on proposals to vacate the property, which would free up the entire AHS site at the Knab for redevelopment.

In response to a question regarding the proposals for the staff who currently work in the old library building, it was advised that the library staff would continue to work from that building, and the aim would be to relocate the eight other employees within buildings associated with the services they provide.

In response to comments regarding the proportion of books within a library that is available to the public, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that to relocate to the old library building would provide additional space and allow for more books to be available to the public.

During the discussion, a Member made reference to the wide ranging discussion on the proposals as reported, and sought clarity on the remit of the Committee. The Executive Manager – Capital Programme confirmed that the Committee is solely to note the report, and comment on operational aspects, rather than any investment decisions. In response to comments from a Member on the need for more detailed justifications on the service needs case to support the project, the Executive Manager – Capital Programme confirmed that further detail will be included in his briefing note to Members.

During debate, Mr Robertson advised the Committee on the circumstances which resulted in the initial move of the library from the Hillhead to St Ringans. He confirmed that the old library building is structurally sound, the works as proposed would extend the life of the building for another 30-50 years, and the proposals would provide two floors for the library and the basement for storage. He added that freeing up the Bruce Hostel would also make good sense if looking for commercial opportunities for the vacated AHS site at the Knab. Mr Robertson moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report. Ms Wishart seconded.

During the discussion, comments were made in regard to the affordability of the project, particularly with the 3.3% savings going forward, and for further clarity on the revenue savings proposed. A Member stated that for the project to succeed further work has to be done to present the project in a more positive light to compete with the other projects in the Capital Programme. However Members also acknowledged that the proposals would bring about efficiencies and enhance the Library service, and would free up buildings for the benefit of the Council and service users.

Decision:

The Committee:

- noted the proposal set out in the SNC attached as Appendix A to the report; and
- commented on the proposal in relation to the services and functions reporting to Education and Families Committee, in order to inform the work of Officers in implementing the project should it receive Council approval.

41/15

Annual Report from Chief Social Work Officer

The Committee considered the Annual Report presented by the Chief Social Work Officer (CS-36-15-F).

The Chief Social Work Officer introduced the report. In referring Members to the Annual Report, the Chief Social Work Officer reported on the national drivers that impact on children's services, and advised on the secondary legislation that will bring about changes and challenges to the Council. She advised on the issues from a local context to meet the delivery of Social Work in Shetland, and on the challenges in regard to the policy and improvement landscape. She also advised on the need to promote public understanding of the value of the services provided, and that staff working in the services should be recognised.

During the discussion, Members thanked the Chief Social Work Officer for the comprehensive report, which provided assurance in terms of very important areas. In response to questions, the Chief Social Worker advised on the following:

- When looking to place children who can no longer stay at home, the starting point is to consider a family placement. There are currently 14 kinship placements in Shetland, and this does not include informal arrangements.
- The current kinship placements reflect the demand, where the aspiration would be to use kinship care whenever possible.
- The good practices in Shetland in regard to kinship care have recently been recognised at a national conference.
- The participation of the Chief Social Work Officer at CMT meetings has been a fairly recent development, and has been positive in terms of information sharing and understanding on corporate issues. Attendance at CMT has also raised the profile and role of the Chief Social Work Officer.
- In regard to the impact on Children's Services with the need to achieve 3.3% savings, the main concerns for next year and future years while being mindful of adult services integration, are with the growth areas of Self-Directed Support, Direct payments and fostering. Other areas of concern relate to pressure on managers, and in particular at team leader level, where there are significant areas of responsibility and scrutiny and constant challenges to make further improvements.
- The Mental Health Officers have a very specific role, remit and responsibilities, and are required to provide agreement on levels of detention. The services provided by the Mental Health Officers are in relation to adult services. The decision whereby two relief Mental Health Officers are based in Aberdeen is a positive and worthwhile arrangement with cost benefits to the Council.

- The increase as reported on Mental Health Contacts and detentions from 2013/14 to 2014/15 could be a result of a number of factors including increased awareness, the service being more proactive, increased capacity in the team and demand.
- In regard to Child Protection registrations and de-registrations as reported at Table 1, it was advised that the numbers of registrations could include re-registrations, however work will be done in this area with improved reporting next year.
- The current level of kinship care in Shetland demonstrates the caring community. There are however issues locally to recruit foster carers, which is a problem not only in Shetland but in other places of Scotland. The Service will however be looking to increase recruitment of fee paid foster carers from four to six. To date there has been no requirement to go off island to secure foster placements, however this may have to be considered in the future.
- The existing out of hours arrangement for Social Workers is currently sustainable, however as support is required from the four social work qualified Executive Managers there will be challenges with vacancies at Executive Manager level.

In response to a request for an update on the child protection cases as reported on Page 7 of the Annual Report, the Chief Social Work Officer undertook to forward to Mr Tregonning the detailed report as presented to Committee last cycle.

Decision:

The Committee noted the Annual Report from the Chief Social Work Officer.

42/15

Development Services Directorate Performance Report Six Month/2nd Quarter 2015/16

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-61-15-F) which summarised the activity and performance of the Development Services Directorate for the reporting period above.

The Business Development and Training Manager introduced the report, and provided an update on projects and actions as listed in Appendix 1.

The Leader made comment on the good collaboration between the schools and Shetland College in regard to tertiary education, which he hoped would continue into the future as the Tertiary Review proceeds.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

43/15

Children's Services Performance Report: Quarter 2

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-34-15-F) which summarised the activity and performance of the Children's Services Directorate for the reporting period above.

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report. In referring to the one project ranked as Red in the "Ongoing Actions/Projects Started prior to 2015/16", she advised on the work that is ongoing on the Schools Reconfiguration Project. In regard to the one project ranked as Red in the "New Planned Actions Due to Start in 2015/16", Members noted the decision to delay presentation of the New Childcare Strategy for Shetland, pending further clarity from the Scottish Government in regard to early years learning and childcare, which is due for publication in April 2016.

In referring Members to the Appendices, the Director of Children's Services advised that this was the first time the Service had used this format for quarterly reporting. She said that as there is some duplication with the information in the report and a number of Performance Indicators that are not measured on a quarterly basis, these areas would be reviewed to ensure improved reporting going forward.

During the discussion, clarity was sought in regard to the Quarter 2 figure reported on overtime hours. The Director of Children's Services highlighted the decline in overtime working from the previous quarter, and advised on the drive to reduce unnecessary overtime, while there was need for staff to be available to work extra hours during particular events. The Director of Children's Services undertook to provide a clearer explanation on overtime at the next Quarter.

In response to a question as to whether the level of risks associated with the Anderson High School project could be reduced, the Director of Children's Services advised that discussions have taken place in that regard, where she acknowledged that the project has moved on from what is detailed in the Appendix.

In response to a comment where it was noted that the information relating to Risk ECOO23 was not visible, the Performance and Improvement Adviser undertook to circulate the detail to Members.

During the discussion, Mr G Smith questioned the value of the performance reporting in its current format, where the information provided is descriptive, rather than analytical, and he made comment on the amount of officers' time to put the reports together. Mr Smith added that he would raise these concerns again at Policy and Resources Committee. A Member concurred with Mr Smith's comments, and made a request that an increased font size is used in future reporting.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

44/15

Development Services – Directorate Plan 2016/17

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Development Services (DV-63-15-F) which described how the Services plan to deliver key actions, manage key risks and report and manage progress and performance through the coming year.

The Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development introduced the report, and in reporting from the Appendices provided a brief update on projects relative to the Committee.

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

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to:

- review and discuss the contents of the Development Services Directorate Plan 2016/17, making any suggestions for amendment or further update.
- delegate authority to the Director of Development Services to make any necessary adjustments to the Development Services Directorate Plan to ensure it is fully aligned with the final version of the Council's Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan approved by Council.

45/15

Children's Services – Directorate Plan 2016/17

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-35-15-F) which presented the draft Children's Services Directorate Plan for 2016/17 which describes how the Directorate is going to deliver key actions manage key risks and report and manage progress and performance across the coming year.

The Director of Children's Services introduced the report. In referring to the Appendices, she highlighted to Members the Corporate Plan Outcomes, the Directorate Aims and Priorities and the actions that have been completed in 2015/16.

In response to a request for further clarity in regard to the Council's participation in the Northern Alliance, the Director of Children's Services advised that the group includes representation from Local Authorities throughout the North East of Scotland to look at educational matters, including regional assessment and attainment, and to ensure the best use of resources and efficiencies.

In response to comments, the Director of Children's Services reported that the cost for Out of School Care has been subsidised in the past, however to meet budget reductions there will now be a need to review charges in this, and other areas, and to look to use facilities in different ways. She advised on the additional budget pressure on the Service from the Government's decision for Primary 1-3 pupils to receive free school meals, and that it is going to be very difficult moving forward to consistently and regularly review budgets in terms of the assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan, where in some cases services may have to cease.

A Member sought clarity in regard to the Directorate Aim "We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society". The Director of Children's Services advised on the joint working among Local Authorities to ensure better recognition of rural and islands issues at a national level. The Director of Children's Services added that the wording for this Priority had been taken from a national indicator, which she acknowledged could be improved to reflect a local context.

A Member sought further detail in regard to Shetland Library's "Assertive Outreach Programme". Following a brief discussion, the Director of Children's Services undertook to provide Members with information on the training programme.

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

Decision:

The Committee:

- Reviewed and discussed the contents of the draft Directorate Plan and made suggestions for amendment or further update;
- Approve the Plan; and
- Delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to make any necessary adjustments to the plan to ensure it is fully aligned with the final version of the Corporate Plan approved by Council.

46/15

Education and Families Committee Business Programme 2015/16

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader - Administration (GL-55-15-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.

On the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Mr Robinson, the Committee approved the business plan as presented.

Decision:

The Committee considered its planned business for the financial year to 31 March 2016, and **RESOLVED** to approve the Business Programme.

47/15

Management Accounts for Education and Families Committee: 2015/16 – Projected Outturn at Quarter 2

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-069-F) which enabled the monitoring of the financial performance of services within its remit to ensure that Members are aware of the forecast income and expenditure and the impact that this will have with regard to delivering the approved budget.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Finance advised that the £135k underspend on revenue on the £40 million budget is quite a tight margin, however there has been improvement and refining of estimates moving from the Quarter 1 to the Quarter 2 position, which it is hoped reflects a better forecast to the end of the financial year.

A Member referred to the report of an underspend of £102k relating to vacancies within Short Breaks and the Bruce Family Centre, and enquired whether the reduced staffing has impacted on delivery of services. The Director of Children's Services advised that the post of Team Leader has not been recruited to this year, however as a short-term solution some of the duties passed to other staff. There has also been a review of some job profiles and person specifications and proposals to recruit to vacancies are to be progressed. She confirmed that services have been able to continue with these interim arrangements in place.

A Member sought clarity in regard to the report that the income from schools meals has reduced following the introduction of free school meals for Primary 1-3 pupils, when he would expect income to rise with increased take up. The Executive Manager – Finance explained the changed budget reporting on school meals, where in the past the income was reflected in the Director's budget, however the compensation is now received at Council level and not allocated to the Service

itself. In response to a question, the Executive Manager – Finance undertook to advise Members on the ongoing costs to the Council for school meals.

In response to questions, the Executive Manager – Finance confirmed that recurring savings identified will be reflected in the 2016/17 budget.

Decision:

The Committee **RESOLVED** to review the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 2.

48/15

2016/17 Budget and Charging Proposals

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-079-F) which set out the controllable budget proposals for the services within the Committee's remit, which will in turn contribute towards ensuring that the Children's Services & Development Directorates meet their target operating budgets, as set out in proposed Medium Term Financial Plan for the period 2015-2020.

In introducing the report, the Executive Manager – Finance reported on the joint working between the Services to prepare the budget proposals for 2016/17. He advised that the proposed revenue budget for the Committee has been set in the context of the Medium Term Financial Plan for a 2% savings reduction, where the budget of £41,738 includes cost pressures relating to pay awards, staff pay increases and pension contributions. The Executive Manager – Finance referred Members to Section 3.2 of the report, where he highlighted the £30k shortfall for Children's Services to meet the Target Operating Budget, however he confirmed that the target operating budgets have been met across the Council as a whole.

The Executive Manager – Finance referred Members to Section 4.1 of the report, where he confirmed that the budget proposals take into account the commitment to maintain teacher numbers across Scotland.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the reports on the analysis from the Building Better Budgets exercise will be represented at Wednesday's Policy and Resources Committee.

In response to a question, the Director of Children's Services advised that the review of the Changing Children's Services Fund will look at partnership working with the voluntary sector and NHS. She added that while the Council has maintained 100% funding over the past years, there has been a need to reduce funding in this area.

In making reference to the £927k reduction in budget for 2016/17, a Member advised on his concern at the lack of detail in the report and appendices as to where the actual savings have been made, and the impacts of these savings within the Service. The Director of Children's Services advised on the £5 million savings across Children's Services over the past 5 years, and that school closures have resulted in £1.2 million savings. She reported that further savings over the next 4 years in line with the requirements of Medium Term Financial Plan will be a difficult process, where she reported that there will be impacts in a number of areas, including central services, staffing, provision of care, short breaks, fostering allowance, service level agreements, operating and energy costs. During the discussion requests were made for future reporting to include detail on the areas of service provision that will be impacted on by budget cuts and a comparison with the

previous year's budgets to better illustrate where savings are being made. The Executive Manager – Finance confirmed that the presentation and level of detail in the budget reports would be improved for future years.

In response to questions regarding the proposed charges for "Sporting Activities Only", as set out in Appendix 3, the Director of Children's Services confirmed that the Service works in partnership with Shetland Recreational Trust (SRT) to set charges to reflect fairness and equality. She advised however, on the piece of work to review all services used and part of the budget to look at the level of services from SRT, and whether the charges are considered appropriate.

A Member sought clarity in regard to the proposed room hire charges for Islesburgh Complex, where it is significantly cheaper to hire a room at the weekend compared to during the week. The Director of Children's Services advised that the difference in price could relate to the increased usage during the week, but she would seek further explanation on the charges proposed and advise Mr Campbell.

In referring to the increases proposed for pitch hire, a Member questioned the impact of this additional cost at this time when sports and voluntary groups are coping with other funding cuts. The Director of Children's Services advised that this additional income is one area that will assist the Sports and Leisure Service meet its budget targets for 2016/17.

During debate, the Leader advised on the statutory duties to be carried out by Children's Service with reduced funding from Central Government, where he advised on the real risk that the Council is seen to be doing too much for a Government that is not entirely grateful. He stated that the Scottish Government has a legal duty to ensure education is properly funded, and that is the message to be relayed from the Council. Mr Robinson advised that it was therefore with some reluctance, that he moved the recommendations in the report.

In referring to the recommendation at 2.1, Mr G Smith referred to the need for improved reporting to ensure Members can make informed decisions going forward. The Committee concurred.

During the discussion that followed, the Leader made reference to the Scottish Government's decisions in regard to pupil/teacher ratios and teacher numbers, which he stated does not suit all areas of Scotland.

A Member made comment that in approving the budget prior to the Scottish Government's announcement on funding, could give the assumption that the Council can deal with whatever funding is proposed, which he said would not support the argument for additional funding.

Mr Robertson seconded.

Decision:

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Policy and Resources Committee and Council resolve to approve the budget proposals for 2016/17 included in the report and set out in detail in the Budget Activity Sheet (Appendix 2) and Charging Sheet (Appendix 3).

The meeting concluded at 12.45am.

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Chair