

# MINUTES

# AB - Public

**Education and Families Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Monday 29 August 2016 at 10.00am**

## **Present:**

### Councillors:

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

## **Apologies:**

G Cleaver	T Macintyre
R Mackay	M Tregonning

## **In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director – Children's Services  
J Belford, Executive Manager – Finance  
S Brunton, Team Leader - Legal  
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

26/16

### **Children's Services Performance Report: 3 Month/1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-17-16-F) which summarised the activity and performance of Children's Services for Quarter 1 of 2016/17.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the paragraph containing reference to the statutory consultations in Baltasound, Aith and Sandwick Junior High Schools (DP008) had been included in error. She went on to highlight key areas in the report, advising that the new Anderson High School (AHS) project was progressing on time and within budget, with the building almost wind and watertight. In response to a request, she agreed to arrange a site visit for the Committee.

She went on to say that the Northern Alliance, comprised of seven local authorities, was currently looking at delivery of policy collaboratively across the areas involved. One demonstration of success was that the Western Isles had now received

additional funding for a project involving electronic delivery of the curriculum, and Shetland may be able to benefit as a result of this. Attainment results this year had been very good, and another academy was now being delivered through the Shetland Learning Partnership. Areas Children's Services would be concentrating on would be to look at providing more support for vulnerable young people over the summer holiday period, looking at off-island placements, and looking at more detail into the announcement just made by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills regarding the Curriculum for Excellence. Concerns for the future related to how to make the budget work, given the commitment to teacher numbers and the political steer that the schools estate should remain unchanged.

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

- There were always a number of young people requiring support during the holiday period, and a variety of different activities had been organised in the past. This year there had been a less co-ordinated approach and a reduction in what was offered, so there was going to be another look how to make staff more available and use resources better to deliver things in the summer holiday period.
- When Looked-After Children reviews were not done within required timescales, this meant that parents and professionals did not have the opportunity to read the full information available before a meeting, and there would be more conversation and oral delivery. Efforts were being made to ensure that the required timescales were met.
- It was hoped Windybrae could be reopened again as soon as possible, but there had been some difficulties in recruiting staff. This was an area that had been highlighted in the inspection report, and the inspectors were due to visit again in November. A report and action plan would be presented to the next meeting.
- There was a drive to encourage foster carers and people interested in adoption to come forward, so that as much care could take place locally as possible, but there was sometimes a need to look for permanency off-island. Work had started to develop excellence in permanence locally, and to link local campaigns to national ones.
- The money awarded to the Western Isles for its electronic curriculum delivery programme had come from the Attainment Change Fund, and it had been match funded by the local authority. The project had arisen as a result of the failure to recruit teachers for some subjects. There would be opportunities in future for Shetland to access funding, and both Shetland and Orkney were looking closely at the Western Isles project to see if it could provide some useful information on how to run something similar locally.
- Following the downturn in the oil industry, 40 places had been provided on a national programme to retrain oil workers as teachers. There were some people locally carrying out teacher training via distance learning. Generally it was possible to fill teacher vacancies locally, although it could be an issue with some particular subjects, but other local authorities did experience difficulties.

- Budget discussions were now taking place at the weekly Children's Services management team meeting. Things were now at a stage where as much as possible had been cut from internal efficiencies, and decisions would now have to be made about the bigger areas that Members would need to consider. It was important to highlight the consequences of ongoing efficiencies – they could not continue without affecting quality, and consideration would have to be given to cutting some of the bigger areas. In the past, each department within Children's Services had been asked to make an equal cut, but Members may wish to look across the whole service.

It was pointed out that it was important that Members were updated should there be an ongoing problem with Windybrae, and that it was important that resources were made available to meet needs.

Concern was expressed that more could be done to ensure that those entitled to free school meals received them. This was particularly important as the application of funding in some areas was based on the percentage uptake of free school meals. It was suggested that in addition to the advertising that was already carried out, information could be targeted at areas where people eligible for free school meals were more likely to be attending, such as the food bank and the Citizens' Advice Bureau. It was further suggested that MSYPs could be used to help pass on the message and to help reduce stigma regarding free school meals.

The Director of Children's Services said that she would take these suggestions on board.

It was noted that the Council's Policy Manager was currently carrying out a piece of work relating to Council Tax Benefit and free school meals, so this should assist in making sure those eligible were claiming.

Some discussion took place regarding the Western Isles project, and the fact that it may provide some useful information on how to run similar projects locally. It was agreed that an early report relating to 'telepresence' should be presented to a future meeting.

It was commented that the budget setting process would require real political direction from Members, and priorities would have to be considered. A general comment was made in respect of all the performance reports that the Council considered, with it being suggested that the descriptive information that was presently included was not helpful and that reports should instead include analytical information regarding the actual impact that the application of resources had on the services being delivered. This information was required in order to assist Members in the development of policy and application of resources in future.

#### **Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee discussed the contents of the report and made relevant comments on progress against priorities to inform further activity within the remainder of this year, and the planning process for next and future years.

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Finance (F-046-F) which enabled monitoring of the financial performance within its remit to ensure that the Committee was aware of the forecast income and expenditure and the impact that this will have with regard to delivering the approved budget.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the projected revenue overspend made up 0.2% of the budget, and not 2% as stated in the report. At this point in the year, the full value of the cost pressures that would apply had not been allocated, and this would be done during the year as more information became available. The start of the academic year would also be incorporated within Quarter 2. The reasons for the projected variances were outlined in the report, and he advised that although the variance relating to the new AHS project had been described as “slippage”, it was better reflected as a profiling variance.

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

- A number of agency staff from the mainland were being used at the moment due to difficulties in recruiting to vacancies in Children’s Residential Care. Some consideration was being given to developing an academy for social care workers through the Shetland Learning Partnership as one way of addressing recruitment problems in future.
- Recurring savings had been identified through staffing reductions and operational efficiencies in schools. When posts became vacant, consideration was always given to whether staff could be shared between schools.
- Sickness and maternity cover had been identified as an overspend because the budget was held centrally rather than in the department, and it was too early to say whether or not this money would be required. This approach had been taken across all committees.
- Provision was made for some overspends in the contingencies budget, and this was an approach that had been adopted to help the Council mitigate any spending risks. It was expected that services would endeavour to meet any additional costs from within existing resources in the first instance, rather than from contingencies. The experience over the last few years was that most savings made had been fortuitous. There had been no conversations with directors that there was a requirement to make new savings to cover anything that may require to be met by contingencies.
- The money that was being held in the reserve fund related to the value of investments rather than cash held. There had been borrowing to fund capital for the new AHS project, but only £2million of the £15million allocated had been drawn down so far, and further monies were due to be borrowed to fund the balance. The Council had also committed to funding the Eric Gray Resource Centre through borrowing and over the next 12 months, around £13 million would be used to fund the contribution to the capital programme.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee reviewed the Management Accounts showing the projected outturn position at Quarter 1.

28/16

**Education and Families Committee Business Programme 2016/17**

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader – Administration (GL-43-16-F) which informed of the planned business to be presented to Committee for the financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

It was noted that as per the earlier discussion, a report regarding telepresence in relation to the Western Isles project would be presented to the next meeting.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee noted its planned business for the remaining quarters of the financial year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, and approved an addition to the Business Programme.

The meeting concluded at 10.50am.