



MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee

Auditorium, Shetland Museum and Archives, Hay's Dock, Lerwick

Monday 6 February 2017 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

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

Also:

A Cooper

Religious Representatives:

M Tregonning

Apologies:

| | |
|-------------|----------|
| G Cleaver | R Mackay |
| T Macintyre | |

In Attendance:

M Boden, Chief Executive
H Budge, Director – Children's Services
J Belford, Executive Manager – Finance
V Simpson, Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
R Calder, Quality Improvement Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
B Leask, Team Leader – Youth Services
J Porter, Team Leader – Community Development
M Thomson, Management Accountant
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

Minutes

Except as undernoted, the Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on (i) 3 October 2016, and (ii) 5 December 2016 on the motion of Mr Smith, seconded by Mr Fox.

Sederunt

It was noted that Mr Tregonning had been listed as a Councillor rather than a Religious Representative.

04/17 Shetland Community Learning and Development Plan 2015-18: Update

The Committee considered a report by the Team Leader – Community Development and Team Leader – Youth Services (DV-10-17-F) which presented an update on Shetland's Community Learning and Development (CLD) Plan 2015-18.

The Team Leader – Community Development summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting that significant progress had been made in implementing the actions, and advising that the action plan had been revised for 2017-18 in order to focus on a narrower number of actions where partners could collectively add value and make an impact in priority areas.

The Team Leader – Community Development and the Executive Manager – Community Planning and Development then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- Locality profiles would be developed throughout 2017, and existing health profiles and the "Place Standard" consultation results would be used to inform this. There had been a feedback from the consultation exercise in terms of the turnout at local forum meetings and it was noted that it may be challenging to engage communities in discussions at this level, especially where communities were already doing so much to support community groups. So it was hoped to also try and reach people where they were in their communities, as well as consider the future roll out of community forums.
- Five Community Councils had piloted participatory budgeting exercises, and there had been positive feedback from these exercises. Officers were optimistic that that this type of exercise would help reach a wider range of communities, and it was hoped to roll out another three in 2017.
- It was understood that the action to "Support young people to manage tenancies" had been dealt with and should therefore not have been marked as red, but this would be checked and updated information supplied to the Committee following the meeting.
- Some of the actions in the plan were of a longer-term nature, so any savings would not be apparent until future years, or they may be generational.

It was commented that the participatory budgeting exercise had been a good example of how communities had come together, and that it would be useful for the Council to develop this to improve community engagement and to help empower Community Councils and other groups so that they were more involved in decision-making than they were at present.

It was also pointed out that as some of the actions were of a longer-term nature and therefore savings would not be apparent in the shorter-term, it was important that

the value of the preventative work being done was recognised and not cut back due to budget pressures or reductions.

Decision:

The Education and Families noted the progress and outcomes of the Shetland Community Learning and Development Plan 2015-18 to date, and approved the revised Community Learning and Action Plan 2017-18.

05/17 **External Audit Report – Care Inspectorate Report of Mossbank Wraparound Care**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-04-17-F) which highlighted the findings of the recent report received from the Care Inspectorate.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular the positive feedback that had been received from parents. There was one recommendation for improvement that had arisen from the inspection, and the quality of leadership and management had not been assessed on this occasion due to a change in staffing.

In response to a query regarding attendance figures, she advised that there were fluctuations in the numbers. This was partly due to the ages of the children using the service and the working pattern of parents, and it was something that was monitored. It was important that this type of facility was sustainable, and there was a need to consider the needs of working communities as parents often did not work in the communities in which they lived. There were further changes taking place relating to early learning and childcare which would also impact on this service, so it would form part of that overall picture. It was likely to be the case that different forms of childcare would be required in different areas.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee noted the content of the Care Inspectorate Report on Mossbank Wraparound Care.

06/17 **Online Learning and Remote Teaching**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-05-17-F) which informed of recent local developments in online learning and remote teaching in education.

The Quality Improvement Officer summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the report looked at remote teaching and the potential for the use of IT to facilitate and enhance this experience. It also highlighted the potential to create further opportunities for staff in terms of their continuing professional development. He referred in particular to pilot projects which had been carried out locally, and to developments in the Western Isles - around the "e-Sgoil" initiative - which were being followed closely and considered when developing approaches locally. The key themes to be considered in developing approaches to distance learning and remote teaching were outlined in the report. It had been agreed that "Glow" (the Scottish Schools National Intranet) would be the most appropriate medium for taking things forward as it was already in place and costs would be mitigated, and the Western Isles had already based their strategy around Glow. A well-planned and co-ordinated approach would be required to move things forward, alongside the professional development of teaching staff and engagement with stakeholders.

The Quality Improvement Officer then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- The possibility of delivering the National 4 Care Course to all secondary settings in 2017-18 was still being explored. A meeting with Head Teachers would be held shortly, and they had been reminded to pass on information about potential interest as soon as possible.
- There would be some set up costs, although the Glow infrastructure was already in place and being developed, so costs would be mitigated. In the longer-term it was anticipated that there could be savings achieved, but it was important that online learning and remote teaching was not seen as a replacement for teachers or a dilution of the service, and this would be the message to get out to the community. The Western Isles initiative had arisen as a result of recruitment challenges in rural areas and it had been developed as a way of ensuring that the curriculum could be delivered, as well as enhancing what was already there. Pupils were able to access subjects that would not normally be in place, partially because of difficulties in recruiting staff.
- One of the key learning points that had been picked up from the Western Isles was in relation to the professional training of staff in order to ensure that teachers were engaged with the process. Bespoke training programmes had been arranged for individual teachers, and there was a dedicated officer within the education department to take the initiative forward. There were four secondary school settings in the Western Isles but the initiative was not about school closures, but instead about enhancing opportunities for all young people to access the curriculum.

During the discussion that followed, the Committee commented that they welcomed the report, which should enhance learning opportunities in Shetland, and commented that they were encouraged by the creation of a common timetable across Shetland which would help enable things to move forward. The potential benefits of enabling the same subject choice to be offered to all pupils at a time when it was proving difficult to recruit staff to remote schools was highlighted, and the potential opportunities relating to partner colleges was referred to. It was pointed out that it was encouraging to see the level of support that had been offered to staff in the Western Isles, and this was something that should be emulated in Shetland.

It was noted that issues had been experienced in the pilot projects in respect of variable broadband speeds in some areas, which had disadvantaged some pupils. It was suggested that this should be used as evidence in efforts to get broadband coverage improved in Shetland, and the importance of this should be stressed.

It was suggested that the Committee should give its endorsement to moving things forward, given that there was recognition that online learning and remote teaching was likely to form a core part of education delivery in Shetland in future. Therefore there was a need to include specific reference to taking the digital strategy forward in the Directorate Plan.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee noted the content of Appendix A to the report "The Quality Improvement Framework, Online Learning and Remote Teaching Report".

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-06-17-F) which described how the Directorate was 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 summarised the main terms of the report, highlighting in particular the four main areas of development for the Children's Services department over the next four years. She pointed out that a number of new performance indicators had been developed which reflected how overall objectives would be taken forward, and the information relating to them would be populated over time.

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

- There were a number of different parts to the funding that would be received as part of the Attainment Challenge Fund. In the past, schools could bid for funding from the Innovation Fund and the Pupil Equity Fund. The last round of funding through the Pupil Equity Fund was specifically aimed at closing the attainment gap, and very clear criteria were now being applied. As the money was being allocated to each school, it was now being questioned if the funding could be applied to the local authority as a whole. The way funding was being allocated meant that schools were each receiving very little money or none at all, but initial indications regarding an authority allocation had not been positive. Discussion would take place at the next Head Teachers' meeting in respect of the Attainment Challenge Fund, and how to use this funding in a way which would be beneficial to everyone.
- The Western Isles had been able to access funding in relation to distance learning, and it was understood that Orkney and Shetland would also be able to access this funding.
- The funding methodology in respect of closing the attainment gap had been based on the numbers claiming free school meals. As all pupils in Primary 1-3 were now entitled to free school meals, data from 2014 had been used to work out the figure for this particular age group.
- It was up to parents whether or not to apply for free school meals, so it was not possible to say whether everyone entitled to free school meals was receiving them. Efforts were made to try and ensure that everyone was aware of the entitlement, and a working group was currently looking at ways to better determine those entitled but who may not be applying.
- The emotional wellbeing project was a national initiative. Locally it was felt that there had been young people who had ended up being educated off-island, when this may have been avoided by earlier opportunities to help support families. One strand of this would be to have more facilities available locally, and to focus on the most vulnerable and put in support at an earlier stage.

Concern was expressed regarding the distribution of funding aimed at closing the attainment gap, as the methodology had been based on numbers accessing free school meals. It was suggested that there was a need to keep challenging this methodology in order to get more equitable distribution of funding for schools in

Shetland. It was noted that if minimum income standards were applied, Shetland would receive more. The funding methodology did not take account of rural deprivation, and it was also the case that areas with larger populations would have a reasonably consistent figure, but smaller areas may not have a consistent uptake each year. It was also the case that people living in smaller communities may be reluctant to claim in case they could be identified.

The Director of Children's Services advised that education directors had tried to put forward an alternative method for distribution of funding, and that this was something that was still being discussed by the Northern Alliance and the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland. There was a commitment to try and support a better allocation of funding, and it would be discussed at the Northern Alliance meeting later in the day. Orkney and the Western Isles were also in a similar situation to Shetland.

It was suggested that there was an urgent need to get together with other island and rural areas to make strong representations to the Scottish Government, and a need to engage with Ministers directly on this matter. It was felt that the uptake of free school meals was not an appropriate methodology to use for the dissemination of funding, and that there were other more appropriate mechanisms which could be used which recognised rurality factors and pockets of deprivation in rural areas. The funding being made available was not adequate to address the issue of lower attainment levels.

The Chair said that representations could be made with those who were members of the Northern Alliance. It was noted that it may be possible to raise the concerns raised when Government ministers were attending the Convention of the Highlands and Islands in Shetland on 20 February.

Concern was also expressed regarding the Pupil Equity Fund, and the general approach being adopted by the government regarding governance and distribution of funding. There were potential impacts on the ability to deliver key actions in the Directorate Plan, which was becoming more difficult in terms of the funding being made available. It was pointed out that the next council would need to remain vigilant regarding changes in governance related to education, and the potential for continuing to bypass local authorities in terms of the distribution of funding. The Scottish Government had indicated a desire to create regions and give more authority and decision-making powers to Head Teachers. This would mean Shetland would become a small player in a big region and, additionally, it would create an extra burden for Head Teachers who were trying to deliver a quality learning experience.

It was further suggested that there was a need to point out to the Scottish Government that the Council did not have the required resources, and could not make any further cutbacks without affecting the services delivered. There was also a need to ensure that the community understood the pressure that the Council would be under to ensure that the key actions in the Directorate Plan could be delivered.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee reviewed, discussed, and endorsed the contents of the Directorate Plan, recognising that the Director of Children's Services would make any necessary adjustments to the plan to ensure that it is fully aligned with the final version of the Corporate Plan approved by the Council.

2017/18 Budget and Charging Proposals – Education and Families Committee

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Finance (F-008-F) which enabled the Committee to consider the controllable budget proposals for the services within the Committee's remit.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, explaining the process that was used to set the budget. The proposals in the report did not meet the target that had been set, largely due to cost pressures being experienced in Children's Resources which had not been recognised when estimates had been put forward. Appendix 2 of the report outlined the budget proposals being put forward, but these did not include things like pay inflation and pension cost increases because they were subject to negotiation nationally. It was also worth noting that the funding allocated nationally in respect of closing the attainment gap had also not been included, as this would be received separately. With regard to Appendix 3 of the report, he advised that the prices being agreed in respect of Islesburgh Youth Hostel were for 2018-19 in order to enable advance bookings to be taken. In response to a query, he advised that the reduction in National Insurance liabilities referred to in paragraph 4.3.1 of the report were not related to a change in policy, but instead to an error that had been identified in relation to the percentage collected across the Council.

In moving that the recommendation in the report be approved, Mr Smith pointed out that the directorate had worked very hard to achieve the required savings, but had now got to a point where it was difficult to find any more without affecting service delivery. The increasing need to provide services to vulnerable children had been recognised in going forward, but there was a need for the Council to be vigilant about cost pressures coming from central government so there would require to be ongoing discussions around priorities.

Mr Robinson seconded, adding that it was important to highlight what the Council had achieved in shifting the balance of spending during its term in terms of channelling diminishing resources towards priority areas such as education and social care. However there would be further reductions to grant funding, so this work would require to continue.

The Chair thanked the Director of Children's Services and staff involved for their efforts to make the required savings.

Decision:

The Education and Families Committee recommended to the Policy and Resources Committee and the Council that they approve the budget proposals for 2017/18 included in the report and set out in detail in the Budget Activity Sheet and Charging Sheet appended to the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am.