

MINUTES

A&B - Public

Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 4 March 2019 at 10.00am

Present:

Councillors:

P Campbell	J Fraser
C Hughson	E Macdonald
R McGregor	D Sandison
G Smith	T Smith
R Thomson	B Wishart

Religious Representatives:

M Tregonning

Apologies:

S Coutts	T Macintyre
H Rankine	

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
J Sutherland, Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Social Work
K Johnston, Solicitor
J McLeod, Performance and Improvement Adviser
M Thomson, Management Accountant
L Geddes, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Declarations of Interest

None

09/19 **Children's Services Performance Report - Six Months / Third Quarter 2018/19**
The Committee considered a report by Director of Children’s Services (CS-07-19-F) summarising the activity and performance of Children’s Services Directorate for the third quarter of 2018/19.

The Director of Children’s Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that information pertaining to the financial performance of the Directorate would now be contained within this report rather than being reported separately, as was previously the case. The Directorate was predicted to have a revenue overspend of £785,000, which equated to 1.8% of the overall budget. The information previously requested in relation to the increased requirement for SRT facilities to deliver PE was currently being worked on, and would be circulated when complete. She also confirmed that the national report on the readiness for

empowerment inspection of Scottish Local Authorities – referred to in paragraph 4.2 of the report – had now been published, and she advised that she intended to present an update on the work of the Northern Alliance to the May meeting of the Committee.

She went on to say that the preliminary work carried out in relation to Pupil Equity Funding appeared to demonstrate that the funding was helping to reduce the attainment gap, and this would be the subject of a report to the Committee in future. She also highlighted the positive feedback received from parents, young people and employers following the recent Careers Event held at the Anderson High School, and the forthcoming participation in ‘Scotland’s Biggest Parents Evening’ as part of Scottish Apprenticeship week. With regard to the increased sickness levels in Children’s Services over the last quarter, she confirmed that for the first time in many years it had been necessary to close two schools due to staff and pupil illness. The increased sickness levels also meant that there were increased costs in respect of supply teachers. She also pointed out that there were now fewer complaints being submitted and fewer Ombudsman investigations, and this could be as a result of the work that the Council was carrying out to resolve complaints at an earlier stage.

The Chair advised that the Northern Alliance conveners met twice yearly to review progress on the thirteen work streams, and the bidding process for the next round of funding had now started. He went on to say that he was hopeful that the progress being demonstrated regarding the empowerment agenda across Scotland would mean that the Scottish Government would not seek to legislate by introducing the new Education Bill. In response to a question, he advised that the Cabinet Secretary – Education and Skills was engaging with the Council regarding the mechanism for distribution of Pupil Equity Funding. It was recognised that uptake of free school meals was not the best mechanism, and work was ongoing to look for an alternative. However, for example, if the General Fund allocation mechanism was employed instead, Shetland would receive an additional £0.5million Pupil Equity Funding.

It was questioned if the Council could use the data demonstrating that the attainment gap was being closed to make a case for more Pupil Equity Funding.

The Chair said that it had been a political decision to direct funding to areas most in need, and unfortunately this did not include Shetland. However the Cabinet Secretary was willing to go some way to addressing the issue, but he doubted that ring-fencing would be removed and funding distributed via the General Fund. The low uptake of free school meals was not unique to Shetland and affected all island authorities.

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

- Consideration had been given to whether the closing of the attainment gap indicated that those previously underperforming were now improving, or whether it indicated that others were now not performing as well. It was taking some time to analyse the information received, but it appeared to demonstrate that the former was the case.
- Following the recent careers event, the Developing the Young Workforce Co-ordinator had collated response sheets from those attending and these had

illustrated that young people were perhaps unaware of the wide range of job opportunities that existed. So engagement would continue with relevant parties to make sure that that young people were fully aware of all opportunities.

- There continued to be difficulty in recruiting to teaching and social work positions, but there had been some positive progress in filling vacancies recently. The Council was looking at various new ways of promoting Shetland, particularly via social media, and participated in college and university recruitment fairs. Human Resources were currently working on creating a workforce strategy.
- Work was taking place with the voluntary sector to engage young people in the emotional wellbeing project, and the Open Peer Group had been commissioned to engage young people to support the project.
- The Scottish Trade Union Congress mental health training course for school based managers would be funded by the EIS, with the Council paying for supply cover. Uptake information was currently not available, but it could be offered to a maximum of 20 people.
- The number of off-island placements should reduce in future due to the service redesign currently taking place. It may be the case that it would be more appropriate to hold the budget in contingencies because numbers were difficult to predict each year, but Members understood the reason for the overspend in this budget area.

The Chair said that he was reassured that budgets were being managed correctly and that overspends were being minimised. However there were areas that were difficult to predict and outwith the Directorate's control, such as off-island placements and sickness cover.

It was commented that it was heartening to see the low number of complaints relating to the Directorate, and it was also suggested that more innovative measures could be taken with regard to recruitment – such as attracting people on working holidays who may be interested in short-term positions. Joint working could also take place with NHS Shetland who experienced similar recruitment issues.

Decision:

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

10/19

External Audit Report (Care Inspectorate) - Urafirth Primary School and Nursery

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-08-19-F) presenting the findings of a recent inspection carried out by the Care Inspectorate.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there had been no required actions. A number of points had been highlighted by the Care Inspectorate, and work was taking place to address these points.

Responding to a question, she said that she felt that the report reflected the benefits of the nursery being involved in the pilot Early Learning and Childcare project. All learning points from the pilot project were being shared with other settings.

It was commented that again the Care Inspectorate had stated that the quality of staffing, management and leadership had not been assessed, but that it was clear from the report that this was not the case.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the content of the report.

11/19

External Audit Report (Care Inspectorate) - Short Breaks for Children

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Executive Manager - Children's Social Work (CS-09-19-F) presenting the findings of an inspection carried out by the Care Inspectorate.

The Deputy Executive Manager - Children's Social Work summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the findings demonstrated that there had been significant improvement since the last inspection. There were no requirements from this inspection but there had been two recommendations, and an action plan had been submitted to explain how these would be taken forward.

Responding to questions, he said that improved communications would help address the recommendations. The recommendation from the earlier inspection that had not been dealt with was as a result of misinterpretation. It had been a very generic recommendation and had not been clear exactly what was required by the Care Inspectorate.

The Committee passed on their congratulations to staff for the positive report.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the content of the report.

12/19

Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation in Secondary Schools

The Committee considered a report by the Quality Improvement Officer (CS-10-19-F) regarding the incorporation of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) into the curriculum.

The Director – Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that all secondary schools had received resources from the British Heart Foundation to support the teaching of CPR skills as part of its "Nation of Lifesavers" campaign. The Curriculum for Excellence required children and young people to be able to demonstrate how to respond to a range of emergency situations at a level appropriate for their age and stage. Some schools already delivered CPR training, and the report demonstrated the Council's commitment to deliver this for all secondary school pupils in Shetland.

Responding to questions, she advised that the commitment was to deliver the training to pupils first, rather than teachers and school-based staff. There had been some initial discussions regarding the installation of defibrillators, and the

Directorate was currently considering which buildings would be best placed in communities.

It was noted that there were charities that could assist with the installation of defibrillators thereby reducing the financial cost to the Council.

Members commented positively on the proposals in the report.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the content of the report.

The meeting concluded at 11.00am.

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Chair