

# MINUTES

# A&B - Public

**Special Education and Families Committee**  
**Main Hall, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Monday 25 February 2019 at 10.00am**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

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

**Religious Representatives:**

M Tregonning

**Apologies:**

S Coutts	H Rankine
T Macintyre	B Wishart

**In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services  
C Ferguson, Director – Corporate Services  
J Manson, Executive Director – Finance  
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer  
A Cogle, Team Leader – Administrative Services

**Chairperson**

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

**Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

**Declarations of Interest**

None.

8/19      **2019/20 Budget and Charging Proposals – Education and Families Committee**  
The Committee considered a report by The Executive Manager – Finance (F-008-19-F) outlining the budget and charging proposals for 2019/20.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the key issues as set out in section 4 of the report, and provided a further detailed explanation as to the information contained in the appendices. The Director of Children’s Services then provided further detailed information as to the information contained in the appendices, highlighting in particular the plan to review the legal agreement with the Shetland Recreational Trust for the use of their facilities.

In response to questions from Mr Tregonning, the Executive Manager – Finance confirmed that the Teachers’ pay award was included at 3% as per the national

offer. Negotiations were still ongoing in this matter with the EIS at a national level, and a strike ballot was due shortly, but no further provision could be made until those negotiations were concluded. He added that the Scottish Government had given a commitment that it would meet its fair share of any revised award, although the detail of that had not yet been advised. The Executive Manager – Finance went on to advise that the Teachers' Pension increase has arisen from a change in UK legislation. He added that the Employers' funding for this would be received from the Scottish Government, provided the UK Government allocation was distributed but this would not be until after 31 March.

The Director of Children's Services confirmed that all rural students received swimming lessons during periods when the pool is open, and for a six week block.

Mr J Fraser referred to the increased need within the ASN Service for Educational Psychology Services, resulting in an increased budget of £5.4m, and asked whether this provision could sit with the IJB. However, the Director of Children's Services advised that some financial support was provided to that area from the IJB and the service was paid for through that line of funding.

Referring then to Appendix 3, Mr Fraser asked whether the cost of dinner, bed and breakfast for adults, sometimes parents, visiting or staying at the Halls of Residence during holiday periods, could be regarded as excessive. The Director of Children's Services advised that whilst the standard of meals was of excellent quality, it was still a matter of choice, and the Council was obliged to recover all its costs above and beyond the cost of the meals themselves, such as overheads and staffing, particularly during holiday periods.

Mr P Campbell referred to the increased cost of delivering PE for the AHS at Shetland Recreational Trust (SRT) facilities and asked if the increase in costs due to swimming would be offset by a decrease in the costs for use of other facilities. The Director of Children's Services explained that an increase was always expected due to the fact that the old AHS had its own PE facilities, but the cost was now attributed to a shared use of the Clickimin facilities with other schools. Mr Campbell asked that Members be provided with details as to the costs of hiring SRT facilities, for the Clickimin in particular, in relation to use by students in Lerwick and rural schools.

Mr D Sandison referred to section 4.2.1 and asked what the level of increase in demand for ASN from outwith Shetland was attributed to. The Director of Children's Services advised that there had been an increase in young families moving to Shetland with ASN requirements at all stages of early learning. Regarding the presumption towards mainstreaming, the Director advised that the increased costs were as a result of requirements for extra support across a number of different settings rather than one, and the increased costs shown in the Appendix was linked to increased demand.

Regarding a query concerning the Clothing Grant, as shown in Appendix 2, the Director of Children's Services advised of the national agreement that requires a minimum grant of £100, and this therefore placed an additional demand on the budget, but no material change in the number of grants.

Ms C Hughson asked if the service was still using SRT facilities for classrooms and if so, was this for a short term only, or permanent. The Director of Children's Services advised that an area was set aside in the Clickimin for PE based

classroom requirements, and this was one of the issues that would be looked at during a review of the contractual arrangements, later this year.

With regard to charges, the Committee noted that the hire charges for Islesburgh and the Gilbertson Park were thought to be broadly in line with SRT charges.

Ms E Macdonald referred to paragraph 4.2.1 and to the ASN increase in additional premises, and asked if this was a temporary measure, or likely to be an ongoing one. The Director of Children's Services said that the service would always encourage, where it can, young people being integrated within mainstream activities. In this regard, and in order to accommodate this, it has been necessary to look at provision within other premises. She said it was hoped this would be for a short period of time initially, but it remained a consideration for the future to ensure that all young people's needs are being addressed.

In response to a further question from Ms Macdonald regarding the new charge for remote instrumental instruction, the Director of Children's Services advised that this was being trialled at the moment with the Instructor conducting 2 out of 3 lessons through remote teaching, with a view to reducing costs in travel but also to allow flexibility in the provision of support staff. She confirmed that this had been trialled in the Western Isles and it had worked there quite successfully, although with a different instrument. The Director of Children's Services confirmed that she would be reporting on this trial to the Committee in due course.

Regarding the lack of a gym at the new AHS, the Director of Children's Services said that this had been agreed at the design stage, as Scottish Government and Scottish Futures Trust were keen to see the use of shared facilities where it was possible, and so this had been encouraged in the design. She went on to say that it had to be recognised that the costs of using the facilities at the Clickimin did not just fall to the AHS, but to other schools outwith Lerwick who use the facilities.

Mr R Thomson referred to the budget activities in Appendix 2, and asked what the mechanism was for changing a status from red to amber, or amber to green. The Executive Manager – Finance said it was a simple objective scale that was used based on the scale of change and wider impacts on the Council. The Executive Manager - Finance agreed to provide Members with details as to the thresholds used for determining the RAG ratings for the changes in budget activities.

In response to further questions, the Director of Children's Services said that an estimated 350 applications for clothing grants was a fair estimate at this time.

Mr P Campbell said that last year some concerns had been raised regarding use of part of the Clickimin for examination purposes, and asked if this was going to happen again this year. The Director of Children's Services said that by working alongside the community concerned, including the Indoor Bowlers, a compromise had been reached for this year so the space would continue to be used.

Mr G Smith referred to Appendix 3, and to the nursery meal charges being introduced for the private sector, which would be higher than a local authority provider. The Director of Children's Services said this reflected the cost of provision by the Council. She said that those costs had not increased this year, and reminded the Committee that free school meals were to be introduced in 2020, and so it would be a matter for the Committee to decide if it wished to recommend all of the school meal charges being equalised.

Referring to Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Free School Meals, Mr G Smith asked, had the PEF been distributed according to the formula used for distribution of Free School Meals funding, if there would be additional funding. The Executive Manager – Finance confirmed that if the Free School Meals formula had been used, the Council could have expected a share of 0.72% from the PEF pot, or £864k. If the distribution was based on all of education, then the Council could have expected a share of 0.62%, or £739k. He added that, as things stood, the Council was to receive £214k, or 0.18% of the wider £120m on offer. Mr G Smith said that this illustrated that the Council was potentially losing out on around £500K to £650K of funding because the Scottish Government had chosen to deliver its funding based on free school meals rather than a formula based approach.

The Chair thanked officers for their responses to Members questions, and to other staff across the Council who had worked hard to produce this budget. He said that the budget had been produced against a backdrop of reduced resources from the Scottish Government, and a will to have a budget that recognises the additional costs being faced. The Chair said he made no apologies for the growth in this budget, saying that it was a reflection of a caring authority that wants to do the best for young people and their families. The Chair said he was disappointed that the settlement from the Scottish Government meant that the Council had to reduce services such as youth work and it would now have to reduce services that are critical to an early intervention approach. However, he said that credit was due to officers in bringing forward the budget proposals today.

The Chair went on to say that ring-fenced funding was working against the Council, and the way in which Free School Meals was being used as an indicator for PEF illustrated that. He said the Council was striving to reduce the poverty gap, and so much more could be achieved if the funding distribution formula was changed. The Chair also said he was interested to hear that the Scottish Government would match its fair share of the cost pressures from teachers' pay and pensions, but the PEF distribution formula was unfair.

Mr G Smith moved that the Committee approve the recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee at paragraph 1.1, and note the Service Redesign Briefing at 1.2, and in Appendix 4. In addition, Mr Smith moved that the Committee also recommend that the proposed new charge for Nursery Pupils – Private Nursery Meals be equalised with the interim charge for local authority Nursery Pupils at £1.80. Mr P Campbell seconded.

Mr D Sandison referred to the SRT element of the charges, and the arrangements for use of their facilities. He said it was recognised that the SRT have to cover their costs, but it was also important to keep an eye on those arrangements to ensure they were mutually beneficial. Mr Sandison went on to say he was pleased with the way in which extended hours for early learning and childcare was rolling out, and noted where the Scottish Government was funding such expansion, but the Council should also note the substantial risk and challenge to the Council if any of that funding was to be held back or not delivered.

Mr Tregonning referred to the increase in staff costs and suggested this was not likely to be 3%, but more, and was sceptical of the Scottish Government providing funding for that. Regarding PEF, he noted that there were better methods of calculating the funding distribution. Mr Tregonning then referred to the recent introduction of Parent Pay for school meals, and applauded its use, particularly as a

way of removing stigma around free school meals. He went on to say that he was not sure he agreed with the motion regarding the charges for private nursery meals, in that the Council would then be subsidising private business.

The Chair said it was only fair to mention that the Scottish Government were willing to look at other measures for calculating PEF distributions, and he was of the view that it should be distributed as part of the General Fund distribution. The Chair said this would give the Council more funding, but the current method meant the funding was ring fenced, as well as using a formula that results in the Council losing out in the order of around £500k.

Ms Hughson said she disagreed with Mr Tregonning regarding the issues around private nursery provision, as not all such nurseries were run by private business but by third sector organisations and were still required to meet all of the same criteria that local authority nurseries had to meet in terms of regulation, inspection and delivery of the curriculum. Ms Hughson went on to commend staff for their hard work in delivering the budget options for Members. She went on to say that young people were an important focus and their futures had to be invested in, but cutting budgets would have an adverse impact at some point.

The Chair said it was recognised that, if approved, there would be an increase of 1% in terms of the target, and most of that was targeted towards ASN or Educational needs. He went on to say that whilst academic results and positive destinations for young people were still quite high, he remained concerned regarding the reduction in youth services and in other areas such as the Library Service, all which supported lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles. The Chair said it was a false economy to be reducing some of those budgets, and would cause harm to some of the intended outcomes, and the Council would end up having to make unsustainable draws on its reserves because the Scottish Government was not giving local authorities their fair share of funding.

The Chair concluded by thanking everyone for their contributions, questions and debate, and there being no one otherwise minded, declared the motion the finding of the meeting.

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**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee:

- **RECOMMENDED** to Policy and Resources Committee and Council that they approve the budget proposals for 2019/20 included in this report and set out in detail in the Budget Activity Summary (Appendix 2) and the Schedule of Charges (Appendix 3), with the exception of the new charge for Nursery Pupils – Private Nursery Meals which should be equalised with the interim charge for local authority Nursery Pupils at £1.80, to be included in the overall SIC Budget Book; and
- **NOTED** the content of the Service Redesign Briefing (Appendix 4).

The meeting concluded at 11.10am.

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Chair