

# MINUTES

## A&B - Public

**Education and Families Committee**  
**Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Tuesday 10 March 2020 at 2.00pm**

### **Present:**

#### Councillors:

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

#### Religious Representatives:

M Tregonning

#### Also:

A Cooper	A Duncan
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### **Apologies:**

T Macintyre	H Rankine
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### **In Attendance:**

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services  
J Manson, Executive Manager – Finance  
S Flaws, Quality Improvement Officer – Early Learning and Childcare  
K Fraser, Executive Manager – Library Services  
K Johnston, Team Leader - Legal  
C Jones, Solicitor  
M Summers, Senior Youth Development Officer  
M Thomson, Management Accountant  
L Geddes, Committee Officer

#### Also:

L Anderson, Member of the Scottish Youth Parliament (MSYP)  
W Sineath, Head Teacher – Cunningsburgh Primary School  
C Leask, J Sinclair & E Wigram – Codices (Young Enterprise Company)

### **Chairperson**

Mr G Smith, Chair of the Committee, presided.

### **Circular**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Before the meeting commenced, the Chair asked the Director of Children’s Services to provide an update on the latest situation regarding Covid-19 in relation to schools.

The Director of Children’s Services advised that schools were being kept informed and issued with the latest information from the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland, and that there were also links to available information on the Children’s Services web pages. The guidance in respect of education settings was very clear, and this was monitored closely as it was a

changing picture. Children's Services were keeping in close contact with NHS Shetland and the Scottish Government, and advising schools and parents accordingly.

### **Declarations of Interest**

None

#### **06/20      Presentation: Young Enterprise Company Teams "Kynda" and "Codices"**

The Committee noted a report by the Senior Youth Development Officer (CS-09-20-F) introducing the presentation on the Young Enterprise Company Programme 2019/20.

It was noted that there were two teams competing this year – Kynda and Codices. Unfortunately Kynda were unable to attend today's meeting, so representatives from Codices would be giving the presentation.

The representatives from Codices gave a presentation to the meeting, outlining the background to the Young Enterprise Company programme - which had been running for 30 years locally - and explaining how it was run with support from local business volunteers, teachers, and Young Enterprise Scotland staff. The aim of the programme was to develop a wide range of skills, and for participants to receive an invaluable entrepreneurial experience. Kynda had sold candle holders made of reclaimed wood and engraved with Shetland symbols. Codices had created an online business directory, and would be marketing and promoting it. Both groups had experienced some challenges along the way in creating their products. These had included difficulties in setting up an online bank account as Shetland was not near enough to a local branch to do so. Both groups felt that it would be of great advantage to have Young Enterprise as part of the school curriculum, as was the case in Orkney.

Responding to questions, the representatives confirmed that there had been a number of challenges and hurdles for both teams to overcome, but that this had been a valuable learning experience in negotiation and collectively coming to agreement. Because of the time commitment required from the people involved in supporting the Programme, there was concern for the future if it was not adopted as part of the curriculum. Having a regular fixed time in the school curriculum dedicated to Young Enterprise would assist with this commitment, and discussions to this effect were currently taking place.

The Committee commented positively on the value and benefits of the Young Enterprise Company Programme, and requested that the Director of Children's Services inform the Committee of any concerns relating to the future of the Young Enterprise Company scheme.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their presentation, and the Senior Youth Development Officer for his support.

#### **Decision:**

The Committee NOTED the presentation from Young Enterprise.

#### **07/20      Children's Services Performance Report - 9 Months/Third Quarter 2019/20**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-01-20-F) outlining the activity and performance of the Children's Services Directorate for the third quarter of 2019/20.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there was an error in Appendix E to the report. The totals in the table should read the same as those referred to in paragraph 4.1 of the report – namely an underspend of £458,000. The main reason for the underspend was the specific funding for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) which required to be carried forward into 2020/21, as it was unlikely to be spent before the year end.

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

- ELC expansion was on track, and over half of the establishments were already delivering increased hours. Contingency plans were in place should some of the work not be completed in time, and it was intended to provide a further update on progress at the next meeting. An update would also be provided to the Committee in respect of children's residential accommodation – also on track now that the building warrant process had been completed.
- Work was ongoing in respect of social work salary scales. It was intended to present reports to future meetings in respect of management restructuring, and some of this related to salary scales.
- The PEF received by the Council went directly to schools, and schools had to report back on how they had used this funding. A higher number of schools – 72% - had received this funding last year, and £1,200 had been provided to those schools that had not received PEF.
- Attendance rates were something that QIOs looked at in some detail, and conversations were held with Head Teachers in order to get a better understanding of the reasons. A breakdown of attendance rates could be provided to the Committee, given that some were now dipping below 95%.
- Because of the interest shown in PGDE, all places would be taken up. There was a need for teachers across both primary and secondary settings, although there were some specific areas that the Council would like to see more teachers in. There was also a need to have more supply staff available, particularly in some specialist subject areas. Spend to Save funding was being used for the PGDE places, and would be applied for again if the scheme was successful. Those applying were Council employees already resident in Shetland, and while something to enforce them to remain in Shetland after training could not be built in, it was something that could be encouraged. A payback scheme for those who left Shetland after training was something that consideration could be given to.
- It was not just young people who were involved in employability pathways, and further information on how many people ended up being employed could be circulated. The Committee remit was for people up to the age of 25, and Shetland College would be able to provide information in respect of those over the age of 25. There were a number of different routes to employability, and more information could be provided around this.

- Schools staff – including young teachers and graduates – attended careers events to encourage young people in training to return to, or come and work, in Shetland. A mentoring scheme for Shetland students was something that could be considered, but it was important not to overburden young teachers when they would benefit from support and mentoring themselves.

**Decision:**

The Committee NOTED the content of the report.

08/20

**2020/21 Budget and Charging Proposals - Education and Families Committee**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager – Finance (F-019-F) outlining the controllable budget proposals for 2020/21 for the services within the Committee's remit.

The Executive Manager – Finance summarised the main terms of the report, advising that there were a number of key assumptions – a pay award of 3%, pension contributions remaining at the 2019/20 levels, income increasing by 2.74%, and reduced government funding. The majority of growth related to employee inflation and teacher pension costs, and an increase in ELC costs.

The Executive Manager – Finance then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- The increased costs for ELC would not be fully covered across the board in terms of pay inflation and in respect of pay negotiations for teachers that had been held last year. The Scottish Government had committed to its proportion of the pay award and there were some additional monies in respect of the teachers' pay award. However the Council would require to meet some of the costs in respect of non-teaching staff.
- There was a need to take long-term action across the Council to reduce expenditure and the funding gap. Whether spending cuts were attributed equally across the Council or allocated to departments was a question for the Council, not this Committee.
- A teachers' pay award had already been agreed for 2020/21 so would not impact on this year. However there would be another to introduce in the next financial year.

The Chair thanked all those involved in preparing the budget, and commented it was not an easy task. Staff were continually having to find efficiencies and savings to meet targets, while continuing to deliver high quality services to vulnerable young people. Efforts were being made to keep the commitment to early intervention and preventative work, as the benefits would be seen long-term, but there were cost pressures in this area of activity. The costs related to staff and ring fencing and the formula used by the Scottish Government did not favour the Council in terms of funding received, so there was a need to keep pressure on. The budget could do with being increased if the Council was going to deliver its priorities in the Community Plan. However he commended the budget to the Committee, and went on to move that the recommendations in the report be approved.

Mr T Smith seconded.

During the discussion that followed, it was commented that while the budget was acceptable, there were increasing concerns regarding the sustainability and quality of education locally if it was not possible to recruit the staff to posts in the relevant subject area, and the ability to recruit staff to provide services in social care and social work. It was a human resources issue as well as a financial one, and the Council was taking steps to try and alleviate these issues. It was cautioned that there would be some serious decisions for the Council to make in terms of priorities, as directorates would be fighting over the money available in future given that funding was being reduced and costs were rising. While the budget could be recommended to the Council, it could not continue to prepare budgets that would lead to a draw on its reserves.

Mr Cooper advised that he would like to draw attention to the “Peerie Maakers” scheme which had been operating in schools for a number of years. The scheme was run by volunteers and the wool was provided by Jamieson and Smith. The only cost related to that of a co-ordinator - a necessary function that had been paid for over the last few years by the LEADER scheme. However LEADER had now finished, and funding would not be provided beyond August. Efforts were being made to secure external funding, but there was no core funding going forward. Given the pressures on the education budget, the Director of Children’s Services did not feel able to include this in it. It was an important scheme that had social benefits as well as educational ones. He accepted that funding could not come from the education budget, but felt that the £10,000 required could be taken out of reserves. He appreciated this would be a decision for the Policy and Resources Committee and the Council, but it was important to raise it at the Education and Families Committee in the first instance.

The Chair said that he appreciated the reasons for raising the matter at this Committee, and suggested that the Leader take the matter forward for further decision at Policy and Resources Committee and the Council.

The Leader advised that he would take this forward for discussion, and suggested it was possible that it may be eligible for the Crown Estate grant scheme.

It was commented that Members were usually reminded that they should not be opening the floodgates for the various projects they had an interest in.

**Decision:**

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** that the Policy and Resources Committee and Council **APPROVE** the budget proposals for 2020/21 included in the report, and set out in detail in the Budget Activity Summary (Appendix 2) and Schedule of Charges (Appendix 3) to be included in the Overall SIC Budget Book.

09/20

**How Good Is Our Public Library Service? Peer Assessor Review Report on Shetland Library**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Manager - Library Services (CS-07-20-F) presenting the “How Good is Our Public Library Service?” peer assessor Review of Shetland Library.

The Executive Manager - Library Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that over half the staff had been involved in the review. The

recommendations for improvement would be taken forward in an improvement plan and, in the short term, improved computer access and support in community libraries would be piloted.

Responding to questions, the Executive Manager – Library Services advised that there was already community use of school libraries. Hours were limited because the public could not access the building during school hours, and the school system could not be used for accessing computers. The pilot project would look at public access to computers, and whether the hours they were open were the best hours for the public. Fines for the late return of books tended to be counter-productive and diverted staff from customer-focused work. They could also put people off using the library, and other libraries were trying to drop these charges as a result.

The Chair congratulated library staff on the positive report, particularly when they were in the process of relocating services.

**Decision:**

The Education and Families Committee NOTED the content of the “How Good is Our Public Library Service?” peer assessor Review of Shetland Library.

10/20

**External Audit : Education Scotland Return Visit to Cunningsburgh Primary School Nursery Class**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (CS-04-20-F) highlighting the findings from the Education Scotland return visit to Cunningsburgh Primary School Nursery Class.

The Quality Improvement Officer – Early Learning and Childcare summarised the main terms of the report, advising that the inspector had found that senior leaders and staff had taken forward a programme of substantial development leading to significant change. Aspects of the practitioner’s practice and development of the learning environment had been identified as worthy of sharing more widely across Scotland. Overall the school had made good progress since the original inspection, and there would be no more visits in connection with this inspection.

Responding to a question relating to how vulnerable backgrounds were defined, the Director of Children’s Services advised it included many different factors. These included living in poverty, rural deprivation and deprivation of opportunity, but consideration was always given to particular circumstances on individuals. Work was ongoing to look at the cost of the school day and how to make this more affordable to everyone, given that some families did not fall into the category of living in poverty but were very close to it.

The Committee congratulated staff on the positive report, and for the examples of work that had been held up as a model throughout the country. It was commented that it was reassuring to see that there had been capacity to respond positively to the improvements required, and that the inspector had confirmed confidence in the ability of the school to sustain that improvement.

**Decision:**

The Committee NOTED the Education Scotland letter on the return visit to Cunningsburgh Primary School Nursery Class.

The meeting concluded at 3.40pm.

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Chair