

MINUTE

‘A’ & ‘B’

Services Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Thursday 25 January 2007 at 10.30am

Present:

F B Grains	L Angus
A J Cluness	C B Eunson
R G Feather	B P Gregson
L G Groat	I J Hawkins
J H Henry	J A Inkster
J C Irvine	E J Knight
W H Manson	Capt G G Mitchell
J P Nicolson	F A Robertson
T W Stove	W N Stove
W Tait	

Apologies:

J C Irvine (for lateness)
J G Simpson

In Attendance:

B Doughty, Executive Director, Education and Social Care
H Budge, Head of Schools
S Morgan, Head of Children's Services
N Watt, Sports and Leisure Service Manager
L Adamson, Committee Officer

Chairperson

Mrs F B Grains, Chairperson of the Committee, presided.

Circular

The circular calling the meeting was held as read.

Minutes

The minute of the meeting held on 30 November 2006, having been circulated, was confirmed.

01/07 **Northern Community Justice Authority (Northern CJA) – Progress Report**

The Chairperson advised that Mr Hodgkinson, Chief Officer of the Northern CJA, had been unable to attend the meeting. The Committee agreed that this item be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.

02/07 **Review of Stewarding Arrangements for the Islesburgh Complex**

The Committee considered a report by the Sports and Leisure Service Manager (Appendix 1).

After hearing the Sports and Leisure Service Manager introduce the report and Members noted that the report had been presented to the Employees JCC and the proposals were purely a formal management matter, Mr E J Knight moved that the Committee approve the recommendation in the report. Mr B P Gregson seconded.

03/07

Schools Service – Service Improvement Plan

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 2).

The Head of Schools outlined the main terms of the report and highlighted the six national priorities that schools have to consider for their Development Plans.

In response to a query from Mrs I J Hawkins, the Head of Schools explained that the priority to progress the Secondary staffing review during 2006 would involve setting a criteria to match secondary pupil numbers with teacher numbers. Members noted that Dr N Galbraith had commenced work on the Secondary staffing review and that the Primary allocation had already been established.

In referring to the national policies and numerous other policies that the Schools Service had to adhere to, Mr B P Gregson said that Members owed a debt of thanks and also had sympathy with the Head of Schools and her staff.

In response to a query from Mr J P Nicolson, the Head of Schools advised that the priority to "introduce "Cultural Ambassadors" into all schools", related to the draft Cultural Bill, currently going through the Scottish Parliament. One recommendation from the Bill is that all pupils must have a cultural entitlement and it is proposed that cultural ambassadors would be staff from within the schools who would highlight this area.

Mr L G Groat stressed the importance of involving and informing parents of children with additional needs during the implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act. The Head of School and the Executive Director, Education and Social Care confirmed that parents would be kept informed and the introduction of the Integrated Assessment Framework would ensure that there was wider publicity for this area.

(Mr J C Irvine attended the meeting).

In response to a query from Mr J H Henry, the Head of Schools advised that the Council received national priorities funding from the Scottish Executive to ensure that schools keep up to date with advances in information technology.

In response to a query from Mr W Tait regarding the priority to develop a dyslexia service, the Head of Schools explained that there had been a recent expansion in this area, particularly relating to identification of the learning difficulties at an earlier age. Developments will focus on ensuring staff are fully trained and aware of the different stages of dyslexia.

In response to a query from Mr R G Feather, the Head of Schools advised that children with hearing impairments are provided with support from a specialist teacher and aids are in schools where necessary.

The Committee moved the recommendation in the report on the motion of Mr W H Manson, seconded by Mr B P Gregson.

04/07

Shared Management

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 3).

The Head of Schools introduced the report and advised that having sourced information from the established and pilot shared management schools in Shetland, a decision is required to recognise the role and responsibilities of the Principal Teacher in the absence of the Head Teacher in shared management arrangements.

Mr J P Nicolson advised that a monitoring committee had been set up to oversee the shared management arrangement for Mid Yell Junior High and Cullivoe Primary School. The monitoring committee deals with any concerns and misgivings adequately and promptly and the community has expressed their satisfaction with the group.

Mr F A Robertson said that the proposals in the report would define and determine the Principal Teacher's overall authority for the operation of the school during the Head Teacher's absence and would give confidence to the system operated in the shared management arrangement.

Mr W H Manson moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report. Mr B P Gregson seconded.

05/07

Pre-School Funding

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Schools (Appendix 4).

The Head of Schools summarised the main terms of the report and explained that the Schools Service would not require the additional funding allocation from the Scottish Executive until 2008/09. Members were also being asked to consider that the current temporary post of Education Support Officer, Early Years, be established.

Mr L Angus explained that currently pre-school nursery and childcare provision in Lerwick was approaching a crisis situation due initially to substantial under-funding. A further issue was the requirement for managers of the facilities to be qualified to degree level. Mr Angus said that investment was required to build purpose built, modern facilities, however he noted that there had been no provision in the budgets for improved facilities. Mr Angus proposed that a feasibility study be undertaken into the provision of a childcare facility for no less than 50 children in Lerwick and that a proper policy should be established. Mr Angus moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report. Mr W H Manson seconded.

The Executive Director, Education and Social Care stated that childcare provision was very important and advised that Shetland Childcare Partnership would be presenting a report to the next Services Committee. The Executive Director confirmed that funding had been made available to ensure that the Blyde Haven Nursery would not be closing.

Mr J C Irvine explained that he had been contacted by representatives from the Little Tykes Playgroup in Gairloch who had concerns regarding funding for the group and fears had been expressed on the future of the playgroup. Mr Irvine said that he was aware that the Head of Schools had previously met with representatives from the playgroup, however he requested that the Head of Schools arrange a further meeting with representatives from the nursery and that Mr Irvine be in attendance at the meeting to ensure this matter was fully investigated and resolved before the meeting of the Full Council. Mr Irvine referred to Recommendation 7.3 "The post of Education Support Officer, Early Years be established", and said that he had concerns with approving this recommendation should the current situation with the Little Tykes playgroup remain unresolved. The Head of Schools advised that a meeting had taken place with the Chair of the Playgroup but she would ensure that a further meeting would be arranged before the Full Council meeting.

(Mr E J Knight left the meeting).

Mr W H Manson advised that the Education Support Officer, Early Years had been a temporary post since 1999, and it was important

that the post was established to continue to support the public and privately owned sectors of childcare provision. Mr Manson added that the report from the Shetland Childcare Partnership should also cover childcare provision in rural areas. Mrs I J Hawkins stated that childcare provision required to be looked at Shetland wide and there is a need to find a way round the requirement that the managers of the childcare facilities had to be qualified to degree level. Members agreed that the requirement for a degree qualification could have a detrimental effect on childcare provision in Shetland.

(Mr T W Stove, Mr A J Cluness and Mr F A Robertson left the meeting).

06/07 **Note of Social Forum – 22 November 2006**

The Committee noted the minute of the above meeting (Appendix 5).

23/06 - Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

Mr L G Groat requested that the Scottish Executive's Summary Handout on the Additional Support for Learning Act and copies of the SIC's Mediation Service leaflet be made available to Shetland schools.

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F B Grains
Chairperson