

# MINUTE

# AB - Public

**Special Shetland Islands Council**  
**Main Hall, Town Hall, Lerwick**  
**Wednesday 13 November 2013 at 2.15 pm.**

## **Present:**

M Bell	M Burgess
P Campbell	G Cleaver
A Cooper	S Coutts
A Duncan	B Fox
R Henderson	A Manson
D Ratter	F Robertson
G Robinson	D Sandison
G Smith	T Smith
C Smith	M Stout
J Wills	A Westlake
A Wishart	V Wishart

## **Apologies**

None.

## **In Attendance (Officers):**

M Boden, Chief Executive  
H Budge, Director – Children’s Services  
C Ferguson, Director – Corporate Services  
N Grant, Director – Development Services  
A Edwards, Executive Manager – Quality Improvement  
M Craigie, Executive Manager - Transport  
J Gray, Executive Manager – Finance  
S Laurenson, Consultant Advisor  
J Riise, Executive Manager - Governance and Law  
S Thompson, Executive Manager – Schools  
K Johnston, Solicitor  
E Park, Transport Strategy Officer  
L Rosie, Communications Officer  
J Thomason, Management Accountant  
A Cogle, Team Leader – Administration

## **Also:**

Prof D Ledingham, Independent Educational Consultant

## **Chair:**

In the absence of the Chair, G Robinson, Leader of the Council, presided.

## **Circular:**

The circular calling the meeting was held as read. It was noted that, with the agreement of the Convener, the start of the meeting had been delayed for 15 minutes

## **Petitions**

The Convener advised that a Petition, with approximately 1800 signatures, had been received and that in accordance with Section 17.4 of the Council’s Standing Orders for Meetings, the Petition would be received as part of the Council’s consideration of the agenda item today.

The petition states: “We the undersigned are opposed to the proposal to reduce the quality of education in the Islands and rural areas. We believe this will cause further damage to our communities and does not fit with the aims identified in the Council’s Corporate Plan. We urge councillors to vote against the recommendation in Don Ledingham’s report.”

### **Declarations of Interest**

None

#### **100/13     A Strategy for Secondary Education in Shetland**

The Council considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (CS-55-13-F), which presented the Strategy for Secondary Education in Shetland. The decision note, stating the recommendation from the Education and Families Committee in the morning, was tabled [Appendix 1].

The Director of Children’s Services and Professor Ledingham each provided a short introduction and summary of the report.

During questioning, reference was made to the costs being incurred and how these compared to other comparable authorities, in relation to staffing, building maintenance, school meals and transport. The Executive Manager explained the following costs were the 2011/12 Local Financial Return figures published by the Scottish Government:

- Staffing - the Council (SIC) costs were £13.698m, Orkney Islands Council (OIC) costs were £8.823m; and the Western Isles Council (WIC) costs were £11.673m. This resulted in the SIC staffing costs being £2m higher than the WIC, and £4.9m higher than the OIC.
- Building maintenance – SIC costs were £1.04m, £303k for the OIC and £374k for the WIC. This resulted in the SIC costs being around £700k than both the OIC and the WIC.
- School meals - costs were £951k for the SIC, £657k for the OIC and £907k for the WIC, therefore the SIC was £294k more expensive than the OIC.
- Transport costs - the SIC costs were £1.163m, £686k for the OIC, and £1.458m for the WIC. Therefore the SIC was £477k more expensive than the OIC, but £295k less expensive than the WIC.

The Executive Manager – Finance confirmed that all local authorities were subject to the same dataset, and the figures were subject to external audit.

Reference was then made to the partnership between secondary education and further education and assurance was sought on the continuation and support of this as the model developed. Professor Ledingham confirmed that having spent time with Head Teachers, he was confident that there was a real willingness to engage in the process, and the more rounded approach afforded by Curriculum for Excellence provided more opportunities for engagement with vocational delivery. He added that whilst the process would not be an easy one, the various strands of the model would progress and be pulled together under the leadership and drive of the Chief Executive.

In response to questions regarding placing requests, the Director of Children’s Services confirmed that there was legislation and policy in place to allow such

requests to be made at present, and in those cases transport and hostel costs were payable by the parents. With regard to the timing of the consultations, the Director confirmed that this would be addressed as part of the implementation plan, and would also take account of the agreed statutory consultations on Primary school provision.

A Member asked about the flexibility for children who were not able to cope with living in the hostel, and what opportunities there were for pupils in those circumstances. Professor Ledingham confirmed that there were already pupils who were unable to attend school regularly due to the complex reasons, and there were a number of solutions that could be put in place, in consultation with and in partnership between the Schools Service, Head Teachers, local authority staff, teachers, and the parents, including options in relation to home study and home support. He said that the models being proposed would strengthen those areas, and would create a structure and a system that could meet the needs of both the Council and its students.

Members asked further questions regarding the higher staffing costs and teacher/pupil ratio compared to other local authorities. Members were advised that the figures published were not always comparable, due to the number of pupils and the basis on which staff were included in the overall costs. The Director of Children's Services advised that savings had been made over the past few years in staffing through efficiency savings and that this would continue. Reference was made to the cost of specialist teachers' travel, and it was noted that there were options in relation to this, as it was an evolving area and the way in which they were utilised could vary under some models.

In response to further questions, Members were advised that the figures being reported for the proposed models included additional transport costs, but the net effect was still a saving. In addition, it was noted that maintenance costs were higher than other areas, as the way in which the costs were calculated was determined not only by the floor area, but the size of the school and the area per pupil, and as Shetland had large schools, and less pupils than other areas, the costs were higher and they were expensive to maintain.

During debate, some Members were assured that the Council had alternative solutions available for pupils who are unable to attend school. It was stated that it was important to ensure an affordable and sustainable education system, and ensuring the best educational opportunities were available to all pupils. It was also recognised that the decision today was to proceed to statutory consultation on the rationalisation of secondary schools, and that it was important to realise that this process would consider not only the educational and financial aspects, but the wider economic and strategic impacts. On the other hand, some Members were concerned at the possible loss of experience of pupils within the local community and the home environment due to having to stay in the hostel or undertake long journeys. There was also the view that there was a lack of detailed explanation as to the comparable costs with other local education authorities. Some Members were also concerned at the possibility of breaching Council policy if the savings cannot be found within the Children's Services Directorate, as required by the Medium Term Financial Plan and that this may result in further draws on the Reserves.

Mr G Smith moved that the Council adopt the recommendation from the Education and Families Committee. Mr F Robertson seconded.

Dr J Wills moved that the Council adopt the recommendations as contained in the report. Mr W A Ratter seconded.

Mr G Cleaver, Mr A Cooper and Ms V Wishart each gave notice of further amendments.

Mr G Smith, with the consent of his seconder, agreed to remove the following words from his motion “and that any shortfall on the £3.268 million savings target be found from a further examination of all Council budgets and consideration of the Council’s Reserve Policy”, but to include a further action point, as follows: “That the Director of Children’s Services/Executive Manager – Finance bring forward a report to the Education and Families Committee and the Council, on the detail of the savings or shortfall required once the statutory consultations have been concluded, and there is a more definite understanding of the financial figures.”

The Council agreed unanimously that voting would take place by roll call vote.

Accordingly, and after summing up, the vote was taken by roll call, and the result was as follows:

M Bell	Motion
M Burgess	Motion
P Campbell	Motion
G Cleaver	Motion
A Cooper	Motion
S Coutts	Motion
A Duncan	Motion
B Fox	Motion
R Henderson	Motion
A Manson	Motion
D Ratter	Amendment
F Robertson	Motion
G Robinson	Motion
D Sandison	Motion
C Smith	Motion
G Smith	Motion
T Smith	Motion
M Stout	Motion
A Westlake	Motion
J Wills	Amendment
A Wishart	Amendment
V Wishart	Amendment
Amendment	4
Motion	18
Abstentions	0

Mr G Cleaver moved as a further amendment that the Council embrace and develop the hub and spoke model on two hubs, with school age being Secondary 1 to Secondary 4 in all of the Junior High School spokes of those hubs, and that to resolve any additional pressures on teaching staff and resources that that will imply,

that the Council develops robust and wide-ranging tele-presence solutions with group delivery across the hub and spoke model. Mr S Coutts seconded.

*[Dr J Wills left the meeting.]*

Again, and after summing up, the vote was taken by roll call, and the result was as follows:

M Bell	Motion
M Burgess	Motion
P Campbell	Motion
G Cleaver	Amendment
A Cooper	Motion
S Coutts	Amendment
A Duncan	Motion
B Fox	Motion
R Henderson	Amendment
A Manson	Motion
D Ratter	Motion
F Robertson	Motion
G Robinson	Motion
D Sandison	Motion
C Smith	Motion
G Smith	Motion
T Smith	Motion
M Stout	Motion
A Westlake	Motion
J Wills	Motion
A Wishart	Motion
V Wishart	Motion
Amendment	3
Motion	18
Abstentions	0

Mr A Cooper and Ms V Wishart each withdrew their notice of a further amendment, and the motion by Mr G Smith was declared the finding of the meeting.

### **Decision:**

The Council **RESOLVED** to:

- a) Create an ambitious partnership between Shetland High Schools and the Further Education sector in Shetland. The Council delegates to the Chief Executive the co-ordination of this element of the Strategy for Secondary Education with the implementation of the Shetland Tertiary Education Research and Training Project. The Chief Executive will present enabling reports in due course.

### **Actions:**

- Align the implementation of the partnership with the current proposals relating to tertiary education;

- Explore appropriate governance arrangements to maximise the learning opportunities for Shetland's learners;
- Shetland High Schools will retain their identities and continue to have Parent Forums/Councils;
- Align curricular models and timetabling and staffing arrangements across the High Schools and the Further Education Sector in Shetland to maximise the opportunities for young people in Shetland;
- Link employers to the curriculum developments for the senior phase to enable the development of vocationally related courses.

b) Create a Shetland Learning Campus. The Council delegates the implementation of these resolutions to the Director of Children's Services.

Actions:

- Align the curriculum at all secondary schools in Shetland to ensure common content, progressions and ease of transitions;
- Develop on-line access to all curricular learning materials;
- Develop and implement an independent learning programme for all students to enable them to access learning opportunities on offer in Shetland and elsewhere;
- Provide independent learning time within all student timetables to enable personal learning to take place;
- Develop and implement a professional development programme for all education staff in Shetland relating to open on-line learning;
- Enable all qualifications delivered through secondary school or college to be undertaken by adult learners – either via on-line materials or through face-to-face attendance in classes.

c) Rationalise secondary education provision in Shetland to ensure an equitable standard of education for all pupils. The Council delegates the implementation of these resolutions to the Director of Children's Services.

Actions:

- Children's Services progresses with statutory consultation on the discontinuation of stages of education, namely Secondary 3 and Secondary 4, in Aith Junior High School Secondary Department with a proposed transfer date for pupils at the end of Secondary 2 at a date to be agreed;
- Children's Services progresses with statutory consultation on the discontinuation of stages of education, namely Secondary 3 and Secondary 4, in Sandwick Junior High School Secondary Department with a proposed transfer date for pupils at the end of Secondary 2 at a date to be agreed;
- Children's Services undertakes statutory consultation during 2014 on the discontinuation of stages of education in Whalsay School Secondary Department, namely Secondary 3 and Secondary 4, with transfer of pupils to the Anderson High School at the end of Secondary 2; to take effect from the start of the school session 2015/16 onwards;
- Children's Services undertakes statutory consultation during 2014 on the discontinuation of stages of education in Mid Yell Junior High

School Secondary Department, namely Secondary 3 and Secondary 4, with transfer of pupils to the Anderson High School at the end of Secondary 2; to take effect from the start of the school session 2015/16 onwards;

- Children's Services undertakes statutory consultation during 2014 on the discontinuation of stages of education in Baltasound Junior High School Secondary Department, namely Secondary 3 and Secondary 4, with transfer of pupils to the Anderson High School at the end of Secondary 2; to take effect from the start of the school session 2015/16 onwards;
- That the Director of Children's Services/Executive Manager – Finance bring forward a report to the Education and Families Committee and the Council, on the detail of the savings or shortfall required once the statutory consultations have been concluded, and there is a more definite understanding of the financial figures.

The meeting closed at 4.45 p.m.

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Convener