

**Education and Families Committee
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Lerwick
Monday 6 May 2019 at 10.00am**

Present:

Councillors:

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

Religious Representatives:

T Macintyre	H Rankine
M Tregonning	

Apologies:

D Sandison

In Attendance:

H Budge, Director – Children’s Services
J Manson, Executive Manager – Finance
R Sinclair, Executive Manager - Assets, Commissioning and Procurement
J Sutherland, Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Social Work
S Flaws, Quality Improvement Officer – Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)
W Missenden, Quality Improvement Officer
C Anderson, Senior Communications Officer
K Johnston, Solicitor
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

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2018 and 4 February 2019 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Campbell, seconded by Ms Wishart.

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2019 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Fraser, seconded by Mr Campbell.

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2019 were confirmed on the motion of Mr Thomson, seconded by Mr Tregonning.

13/19 **External Audit Report: Care Inspectorate Report on Windybrae Residential Childcare Service**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Services (CS-14-19-F) presenting the Care Inspectorate report on the Windybrae Residential Childcare Service.

The Deputy Executive Manager – Children’s Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that this was the first time the service had been inspected in its own right since it had been registered as a separate service in December 2017. Therefore all four themes had been inspected, and there were no requirements or recommendations as a result of the inspection.

Responding to questions, he advised that the issue relating to the lack of a senior staff member impacting on the developmental aspects of the manager’s time had arisen as a result of maternity leave and sickness absence, but it had now been possible to cover the post. He went on to say that the second part of the house allowed for services to be delivered more flexibly, so it was still proposed to proceed with refurbishment works.

Decision:

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

14/19 **External Audit Reports - Care Inspectorate Reports on Sandwich Junior High School Nursery, Dunrossness Primary School Nursery, and Ness Out of School Care Service**

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services (CS-13-19-F) presenting the Care Inspectorate reports on Sandwich Junior High School Nursery, Dunrossness Primary School Nursery, and Ness Out of School Care Service.

The Director of Children’s Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that Sandwich Junior High School would be the subject of an HMI inspection later in the month and the nursery would also be part of this process.

The Quality Improvement Officer – ELC then responded to questions, and the Committee noted the following:

- Play areas in schools were moving away from fixed playground equipment to ‘loose parts’ play and open-ended resources. This had been shown to develop a greater level of thinking and learning, and was important in gross motor skills development.
- There was a standard care plans template in place across nurseries. However it was the process behind the plans which had been referred to in the inspection – how often they were updated, what information they should contain and how often they were shared with parents.
- It was valuable to note that inspection reports locally did not highlight that interactions with children needed to improve. However in recognition of the time

staff had to spend completing paperwork, contracts had been looked at as part of the expansion plans. Up to two hours each day (*pro rata*) was being protected in contracts to enable staff to carry out non-contact tasks such as administrative work.

- Parental involvement was sometimes identified as an area for development and, as it was a broad term, it was something that could vary at each setting. However it was important that each setting had a good understanding about how much involvement the parents in their community wished to have.
- Staffing was allocated according to Care Inspectorate ratios, and there were Modern Apprentices in some settings in addition to staff.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the contents of the report.

15/19

Education Scotland Reports: Thematic Inspections

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services (CS-11-19-F) presenting the findings of inspections carried out by Education Scotland.

The Director of Children's Services summarised the main terms of the report, advising that these were the first two inspections carried out focusing on school empowerment as part of the delivery of the Education Bill Policy Ambition – Joint Agreement. The reports published did not specifically highlight Shetland, but good feedback had been received. The final inspection report, involving the Anderson High School, had yet to be published. Children's Services would carefully consider the findings and recommendations of the reports, and the next steps were outlined in Section 4.4 of the report. Part of this involved reviewing the role of teaching Head Teachers, as more than half of Head Teachers locally were teaching Head Teachers. Teaching Head Teachers had indicated that they were engaged with their dual role, but a review of clerical staffing would also be taking place as Head Teachers could be better supported in their dual role.

Responding to questions, the Director of Children's Services advised that local authorities were working to a tight timescale as the Deputy First Minister had given them one year to demonstrate to him that education could be taken forward in Scotland without the need to legislate. Increasing bureaucracy was something that was being spoken about at a national level. A group was currently reviewing the need for school business managers, but whether this was something that could be done within existing resources would have to be worked out.

She went on to say that recruitment and retention continued to be a challenge – both locally and nationally. It had always been the case that there were some specialist secondary posts that were very difficult to recruit to locally, but for the first time recently it had not been possible to recruit to a temporary primary school teacher position. It was an area of concern that there was not the surplus of supply staff that there had been in the past.

The Chair commented that politically this series of reports was very important, as they would give the Deputy First Minister the information he sought in relation to whether or not legislation was required. In terms of resources, local authorities were being expected to do more with less. Empowerment would add to this, and increase pressures on teaching and non-teaching staff. Therefore Children's

Services would either require to get a bigger share of Council resources or a reorganisation of how education was delivered locally would be required, as it was not possible to continue delivering more for less. He was also of the view there was a real need to consider whether there was equitable distribution of resources locally, particularly where schools were just on the margins of teaching Head Teacher settings.

Concerns were expressed regarding the fundamental direction of travel of education in Scotland, and the possibility that it may end up like the academy system in England - where some teaching staff had to end up effectively running a business rather than being able to focus on education. This was something that had also started off being sold as a move to empower schools, so it was important that teaching staff in Scotland were not undermined by things they had not signed up to and that these concerns were fed back to the Scottish Government.

The Chair commented that there was a need to value and protect the education system, and ensure that the focus for teachers and parents remained on teaching and learning rather than governance. While there were schools nationally that had sufficient numbers to justify some devolved school management, there was a need to ensure that a 'one size fits all' model was not rolled out should the Deputy First Minister decide to legislate. If legislation proceeded, the Council would need to ensure that 'island proofing' did take place to reflect local needs. He confirmed that the Council did take every opportunity to express its concerns and to reiterate that a 'one size fits all' model would not be helpful locally.

The Leader added that while the Scottish Government had set out on a path to introduce legislation, it had chosen not to do so at this point because of the work carried out by local authorities via CoSLA. The Council was working in partnership with other local authorities and had raised concerns, but there were tensions that existed that required to be addressed by the Scottish Government.

It was commented that the Committee should endeavour to secure budgets for the services it delivered as they were vital for the future of Shetland, and the Chair advised that he would do his utmost to ensure that this was the case.

Decision:

The Committee NOTED the contents of the report.

16/19

Review of Childcare Grant Aid Fund

The Committee considered a report by the Quality Improvement Officer – ELC (CS-16-19-F) regarding proposed revisions to the Childcare Fund.

The Quality Improvement Officer – ELC summarised the main terms of the report, advising that a number of revisions had been made to the Childcare Fund which had been introduced in 2012 to support providers in the private and voluntary sectors. Some minor changes had been made to better reflect current thinking and pedagogy, and the maximum grant had been increased. It was hoped that these changes and further promotion of the Fund would result in a better uptake, as during this period of expansion it was an appropriate mechanism for providers to access financial support.

In response to questions, she advised that there was currently £6,000 allocated to the budget, but that it would be supplemented with expansion funding so that all

applications could be met during the expansion period. Assisting with staffing costs via the Fund was a more complex situation, and the Council had to ensure it was not effectively acting as an employer. However if providers used the funding to assist them with development projects relating to the expansion of ELC, this should free up some of their own funds to assist with staffing. Children's Services staff engaged regularly with ELC providers and were encouraging them to access the Fund. There were indications that a number of applications would be submitted.

It was suggested that the date of "1 April 2011" referred to in relation to the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme was probably now superfluous and could be removed.

Decision:

The Committee approved the revisions made to the Childcare Fund.

17/19

Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare: Phasing and Capital Programme Plan – Update 2018/19

The Committee considered a report by the Quality Improvement Officer – ELC (CS-15-19-F) regarding the updated position in relation to the expansion of ELC.

The Quality Improvement Officer summarised the main terms of the report, advising that a further two settings were now delivering 1140 hours locally and an additional five Modern Apprenticeship posts were currently being advertised. Building work at Happyhansel had now been completed and tenders were in the process of being awarded or had been awarded for the next four priority settings – Baltasound, Bells Brae, Cunningsburgh and Sound. In the case of the Mossbank setting, capital works were not required to meet the additional capacity. It had been recognised that some funding was required towards internal improvements, but these did not require to be carried out during holiday periods.

Responding to questions regarding the Capital Programme, the Executive Manager - Assets, Commissioning and Procurement advised that it was progressing as planned. The tenders in respect of the aforementioned projects had either been awarded or were in the process of being awarded, and it would be up to the contractors to keep the projects on track once work started. The Council had a duty to oversee the work to ensure what was planned was delivered on time, but while there were some penalties that existed in relation to contracts being completed in time, they were not as punitive as they might be. When punitive penalties were inserted into tender documents, this tended to be reflected in the contract prices that were tendered. When contracts were awarded, it had to be assumed that the programme would be followed, and the Committee would be kept apprised.

The Chair commented that it was important to ensure that oversight and supervision were sufficient to ensure that there was not slippage in the contracts at this critical time. Parents had already been informed that settings would be closing early for the holidays and returning late, so it was important to deliver these projects on time. The expansion of ELC would remain as a standing item on the agenda so that the Committee could be kept informed.

Decision:

The Committee noted the updated position in relation to the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.

The meeting concluded at 11.05am.

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Chair