

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 2 July 2024. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Greig, Convener; and Councillors Allard, Blake, Brooks, Copland (as substitute for Councillor Radley), Grant (for articles 10 to 15), Henrickson (as substitute for Councillor Hazel Cameron), Hutchison (as substitute for Councillor Fairfull), Lawrence (as substitute for Councillor Grant for articles 1 to 9), McLeod, Nicoll (as substitute for Councillor Mennie), MacGregor, Mrs Stewart and Yuill (as substitute for Councillor Bouse). External Members:- Ms Danielle Barclay (Parent Representative - Nursery / Primary) (for articles 1 to 12), Mr Doug Haywood (as substitute for Miss Pamela Scott) (for articles 1 to 12), Ms Jacqueline Munro (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools) (for articles 1 to 12) (for articles 1 to 12), Dr Alison Murray (Parent Representative - Secondary) (for articles 1 to 12), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative) (for articles 1 to 12) and Mrs Hilda Smith (Church of Scotland representative) (for articles 4 to 12).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be located [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND TRANSPARENCY STATEMENTS

1. There were no declarations of interest nor transparency statements made at this juncture.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 30 APRIL 2024

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 30 April 2024 for approval.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

3. The Committee had before it the business planner as prepared by the Interim Chief Officer – Governance.

Members asked a number of questions on the planner and it was noted that the Aberdeen City Parent Forum had expected that the denominational schools report (item 23 on the planner) would be on the agenda for this meeting and there was concern around the consultation process. Officers clarified that the report on the outline business case was due to Committee at the September meeting, and that the matter was currently at the informal consultation stage.

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The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would remove reference to 'Interim' from the posts mentioned in the planner items;
- (ii) to note that officers would issue communication to parents in denominational schools to advise of the process to be undertaken, including reassurance that no decisions had been taken at this point in the process;
- (iii) to agree to remove items 11 (Education and Children's Services Reforms) and 14 (Sunnybank School Relocation of Additional Services – Options Appraisal) for the reasons outlined in the planner; and
- (iv) to otherwise note the planner.

NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR KATE BLAKE

4. The Committee had before it a notice of motion by Councillor Blake, in the following terms:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) agrees that strong parental engagement is important to educational outcomes and notes that this is enshrined in law via Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, which established a "duty of the Scottish ministers to promote the involvement of the parents of pupils in attendance at public schools";
- (b) notes that the National Parent Forum of Scotland is a statutory consultee mentioned by name in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 – Gaelic provisions;
- (c) notes with concern the decision of the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills to defund the National Parent Forum of Scotland on 18th May 2024;
- (d) notes that the independent organisational review of the National Parent Forum of Scotland published in February paid for by the Scottish Government gave the following recommendation:
 - “The findings of this review provide strong evidence of the on-going impact of NPFS. However, without adequate funding, the current situation is not sustainable, and the organisation is at risk of spiralling into a downward trajectory without the financial support it requires”.
- (e) The review did not recommend defunding the organisation;
- (e) notes that the Cabinet Secretary has outlined in her response to the Scottish Parliament on 21st May 2024 that the National Parent Panel run by the charity Connects will be up and running by the new academic year in August;
- (f) instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to write to the Cabinet Secretary to ask for the implementation plan including timeline and volunteer mobilisation plan, so that there is no loss of the parental

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- voice of Aberdeen at a national policy level and to also ask for clarification around any potential impact on Gaelic Medium Education; and
- (g) instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to write to parent councils and parents across the city to reassure them of continuity of support from a national organisation.

At this juncture there was a short recess to allow Councillor Blake and the Convener to discuss a potential amendment by the Convener, after which the following alternative wording was proposed which combined part of Councillor Blake's motion and part of the Convener's potential amendment.

That the Committee:-

- (a) agree that strong parental engagement is important to educational outcomes and note that this is enshrined in law via Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006, which established a "duty of the Scottish ministers to promote the involvement of the parents of pupils in attendance at public schools";
- (b) agree that Aberdeen City Council supports representation of parental voice from a wide range of perspectives and experiences and recognises the benefits of improving engagement with traditionally underrepresented groups, such as parents and carers from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who have children with additional support needs;
- (c) acknowledge that the establishment of the new parent assembly, which will have around 100 members, will provide fresh opportunity for addressing historic challenges around engagement in the city and across Scotland;
- (d) agree that the membership should aim to reflect diversity in Scotland, including parents, carers and families with an interest in Gaelic and Gaelic Medium Education (GME); those with children with additional support needs (ASN), neurodiversity, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds;
- (e) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to write to the Cabinet Secretary seeking assurance that members of the National Parent Forum of Scotland will be involved in the new parent assembly; and that parental voice and diversity in the city will be enhanced through the new model; and
- (f) appreciate the contribution that parental engagement makes in Aberdeen and instructs the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to engage with parents and carers in the city to promote and develop parental engagement.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning was due to meet with Connect in the next two weeks and would share an update with the Aberdeen City Parent Forum after the meeting; and
- (ii) to adopt the amended motion.

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PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK/ACCESSIBILITY AND BEHAVIOUR PROGRESS REPORT - FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES - CORS/24/194

5. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented (a) the status of key annual performance measures relating to the Children's and Family Services function, including summary National Benchmark Measures derived from the second release of educational data through the national Insight tool and (b) a progress update in relation to ongoing work around addressing accessibility and behaviour issues within schools.

With reference to article 7 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee also received a presentation at this juncture from Mr Mike Paul, Bucksburn Academy, on Maybo training.

Members asked a number of questions on the report and the presentation.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the information contained in the report appendices.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to thank Mr Paul for his presentation on Maybo;
- (ii) to note that officers would circulate information to Members outwith the meeting on the numbers included in Quintile 2, and would also reflect this in the National Improvement Framework report to be presented to Committee in September; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

INSPECTION REPORTING - F&C/24/192

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which detailed the outcome of inspection reports published by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) and The Care Inspectorate on the quality of Aberdeen City schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings since the last meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the report; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement continuous improvement in keeping with agreed Quality Improvement Frameworks.

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The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

APPROACHES TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT - F&C/24/195

7. With reference to article 11 of the minute of its meeting of 4 July 2023, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which detailed how Aberdeen City schools and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings would be supported to improve performance against the Core Quality Indicators used by His Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) and The Care Inspectorate.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the report;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to immediately implement the approach detailed in the Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Quality Improvement Framework;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to implement the approach detailed in the Aberdeen City Council Quality Improvement Framework across all schools from August 2024; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to review the impact of arrangements on evaluations of core Quality Indicators over school session 2024/5, amending approaches as required, and report back to Committee with any proposed changes to arrangements in advance of the 2025/6 school session.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

CONSULTATION REPORTS: PROPOSED CATCHMENT AREA CHANGES FOR HAZLEHEAD ACADEMY, GREENBRAE SCHOOL AND SCOTSTOWN SCHOOL - F&C/24/196

8. With reference to article 8 of the minute of its meeting of 21 March 2023 and article 10 of the minute of its meeting of 21 November 2023, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the outcomes of two recent statutory public consultations, on proposals to make changes to the school catchment areas for (1) Hazlehead Academy and (2) Greenbrae School and Scotstown School.

Members asked a number of questions on the report.

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The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the decision of Council on 13 December 2023, to construct a new 1600 pupil campus on the current Hazlehead Academy playing fields to provide secondary school provision for the Hazlehead and Countesswells Associated School Groups;
- (b) agree to implement changes to the existing Countesswells and Hazlehead secondary school catchment areas, as defined within Map 2 in the consultation report at Appendix 1 of this report, to create a new catchment area which will be served by the new Hazlehead Academy, with effect from 1 August 2027; and
- (c) agree to implement changes to the catchment areas for Greenbrae School and Scotstown School, as defined within Map 2 in the consultation report at Appendix 2 of this report, with effect from 1 August 2024.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would ask Roads colleagues to provide information on the criteria which was considered for safe walking routes to schools and would circulate this to Members outwith the meeting; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

EASTER IN THE CITY PROGRAMME 2024 - F&C/24/189

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which shared a high level evaluation of the Easter in the City programme 2024 and sought delegated authority to design and deliver a programme for the upcoming school holiday periods (autumn 2024 and spring 2025). The report advised that the summer 2024 programme was currently live and evaluation on the impact of the programme would be reported to committee following delivery.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the high level evaluation of the Easter in the City programme;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to design and deliver a programme for the autumn (2024) and spring (2025) holiday periods using the budget allocated by Council; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the summer, autumn (2024) and spring (2025) programmes following delivery.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would provide further detail in future reports as to any overlap between the priority group categories; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

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FREE SCHOOL MEALS ANNUAL UPDATE - F&C/24/180

10. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the annual update on Free School Meals and sought approval to implement a school meals pre-order app for all Secondary Schools in the city.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the progress in Free School Meal provision and actions to continue increasing uptake;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to progress the implementation of the school meals pre-order app for all Secondary Schools in the city; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to report on the impact of the pre-order app in the next annual update report on Free School Meals.

At this juncture, Councillor Grant advised, for reasons of transparency, that his son was in primary 7 and would be moving up to St Machar Academy, but he did not feel this amounted to an interest which needed to be declared, and advised that he would be remaining in the meeting.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Allard, moved:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) welcomes the progress made in improving uptake in Free School Meals in the city and actions to continue increasing uptake and thanks officers, schools and families for the continued effort;
- (b) agrees officers' recommendations;
- (c) notes that officers' service update, in November 2023, stated that '...no further work on designing and planning solutions for increasing the capacity of school kitchens and dining spaces will be undertaken, until details of any further capital grant and revenue funding from Scottish Government to support the rollout are known and until the required implementation date for the provision of free school meals to Primary 6 and 7 pupils is confirmed'; and
- (d) agrees that it is imperative that this Committee presses the Scottish Government to deliver on making primary school meals universally free and therefore instructs the Executive Director of Families and Communities, in consultation with the Convener and Vice Convener of the Education and Children's Services Committee to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to seek an urgent update and confirmation from the Scottish Government on when it plans to implement universal free school meals, up to primary 7, in full.

Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Blake, moved as an amendment:-

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That the Committee:-

- (a) welcomes the progress made in improving uptake in Free School Meals in the city and actions to continue increasing uptake and thanks officers, schools and families for the continued effort;
- (b) agrees officers' recommendations;
- (c) notes that officers' service update, in November 2023, stated that '...no further work on designing and planning solutions for increasing the capacity of school kitchens and dining spaces will be undertaken, until details of any further capital grant and revenue funding from Scottish Government to support the rollout are known and until the required implementation date for the provision of free school meals to Primary 6 and 7 pupils is confirmed';
- (d) agrees that the commitment to implement universal free school meals was a flagship policy of the Scottish Government when it came to power in 2021 and that failure to deliver this in full, during a cost-of-living crisis, would represent a bitter broken promise for struggling Aberdeen families and children in primaries 6 and 7; and
- (e) agrees that it is imperative that this committee presses the Scottish Government to deliver on making primary school meals universally free and therefore instructs the Executive Director of Families and Communities to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Education to seek an urgent update and confirmation from the Scottish Government on when it plans to implement universal free school meals, up to primary 7, in full.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (14) – the Convener; Councillors Allard, Copland, Henrickson, Hutchison, MacGregor, Nicoll, Mrs Stewart and Yuill; and Ms Barclay, Ms Munro, Dr Murray, Mr Murray and Mrs Smith; for the amendment (4) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant and McLeod; declined to vote (1) – Mr Haywood.

The Committee resolved:-

to adopt the motion.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DELIVERY PLAN 2024-26 - F&C/24/181

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the progress and outcomes of the improvement activities and actions in the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24, and sought approval for an updated Delivery Plan for 2024-26, in line with the Council's statutory duties to prepare and publish a plan.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the report on the progress and outcomes of the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24;

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- (ii) welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with Scottish Childminding Association to deliver Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future (PSCF), a National Partnership Programme on Childminder Retention & Recruitment, in Aberdeen;
- (iii) approve the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26 and instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to deliver the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan in line with statutory guidance and Best Start: Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan for Scotland 2022-26;
- (iv) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to work in partnership with the Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) to align the planned Early Learning and Childcare longitudinal study research with the next statutory consultation with Parents and Carers in June 2025; and
- (v) instruct the Chief Officer Education and Lifelong Learning to report on the progress and outcomes of the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26, and to prepare an updated Delivery Plan for 2026-28, in June 2026, in line with our statutory duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

HEALTHY WEIGHT - CFS/24/188

12. With reference to article 5 of the minute of its meeting of 20 February 2024, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval to progress work to increase the number of children and young people who were of a healthy weight by taking a whole system approach.

Members asked a number of questions of the Executive Director and Professor Phil Mackie, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Grampian, who was in attendance for the item.

During the discussion, Councillor Yuill made a transparency statement in relation to his membership of the Board of NHS Grampian, however he did not consider that this amounted to a declaration which would require him to leave the meeting.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the work undertaken to learn from published research and local data;
- (b) endorse the proposed whole systems approach;
- (c) instruct the Executive Director Families and Communities to update Members on the output of the event noted in paragraph 3.17 through a Service Update, noting that officers could prepare a report if this was felt necessary depending on the outcomes from the event; and

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- (d) instruct the Executive Director Families and Communities to report progress within one calendar year.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that if Members were interested in attending the event on 30 August, they could contact the Executive Director Families and Communities to express their interest; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

At this juncture, the External Members left the meeting.

LEARNING DISABILITIES, AUTISM AND NEURODIVERGENCE BILL - CFS/24/193

13. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the introduction of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence Bill and its implications for services in Aberdeen City.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the report and the intentions of the Learning Disabilities, Autism and Neurodivergence (LDAN) Bill; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer Children's Social Work & Family Support/Chief Social Work Officer to provide an update on progress of the Bill as appropriate.

The Committee:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer Children's Social Work and Family Support would liaise with Health and Social Care Partnership colleagues as to (a) whether the Autism Plan would require to be updated in the interim; and (b) the uptake in respect of the annual health checks offered for people with learning disabilities; and would provide this information to Members outwith the meeting via service update; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

EDGE OF CARE PILOTS - CFS/24/197

14. With reference to article 13 of the minute of its meeting of 4 July 2023, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the progress of the 'Edge of Care' Pilots being delivered in Lochside and Northfield Academies and the proposed next steps.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the progress and learning captured by the Edge of Care Pilots;

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- (b) note that multi-agency intensive support continues to be provided to young people who are on the edges of school and care, and that opportunities to expand the 'pilot' model will be considered within the Family Support Model; and
- (c) instruct the Executive Director Families and Communities to incorporate the learning from the Edge of Care Pilots within the developing Family Support Model.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer Children's Social Work and Family Support would keep Members apprised of the funding allocation within future reports; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

FAMILY SUPPORT MODEL - F&C/24/191

15. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval to progress a period of co-design to shape the provision of multi-agency family centric support for families facing complex challenges in Northfield.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the work undertaken to date to learn from published research and local data;
- (b) approve the high level Development Plan available in Appendix A; and
- (c) and delegate authority to the Executive Director Families and Communities to design and recruit a change management team to drive, monitor and report on the development of the Family Support Model.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

- COUNCILLOR MARTIN GREIG, Convener