

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 17 September 2024. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Greig, Convener; Councillor Mennie, Vice-Convener; Councillor Steve Delaney, the Depute Provost (as substitute for Councillor Bouse); and Councillors Allard, Blake, Brooks, Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney (as substitute for Councillor Bouse), Hutchison (as substitute for Councillor Fairfull), Grant, McLeod, Radley, MacGregor, McLellan and Mrs Stewart. External Members:- Ms Danielle Barclay (Parent Representative - Nursery / Primary), Mr Doug Haywood (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools), Ms Jacqueline Munro (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools), Dr Alison Murray (Parent Representative - Secondary), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Madhav Regmi (Third Religious Representative) and Mrs Hilda Smith (Church of Scotland representative) (for articles 1 to 11).

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. Members were requested to intimate any declarations of interest or connections, whereby the following were noted:-

In relation to item 10.1 (Music Service Update), Councillor Blake advised that her sons took music lessons through the Music Service and one had participated in many of the performances highlighted in the report and was a member of one of the ensembles, however she did not consider this amounted to an interest which would prevent her from taking part in the item. Also in relation to item 10.1 (Music Service Update), Councillor McLeod advised that he had previously been the Music Co-ordinator for Aberdeen City Council, however he also did not consider that this amounted to an interest which would prevent him from participating in the item. Finally in relation to item 10.1, Dr Murray advised that she also had a son who had received lessons from the Music Service.

In relation to item 10.4 (School Estate Plan), Councillor Blake advised that she had two children at Cults Academy however she did not consider this to be an interest which needed to be declared. Also in relation to item 10.4, Ms Barclay stated that she had two children in a feeder primary school for Northfield Academy but did not consider this amounted to an interest at this time which would prevent her from participating in the item. Dr Murray advised that she also had a child who attended primary school, but again, did not consider that this amounted to an interest which would require her to leave the meeting for that item.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

In relation to item 10.5 (Denominational Primary Schools), Councillor Mrs Stewart advised that she was a practising Roman Catholic and three of her children had attended St Joseph's RC School prior to attending Aberdeen Grammar School. She did not consider that this amounted to an interest which required to be declared and advised that she would be participating in the item. Also in relation to this item, Mr Murray advised that he had two grandchildren who attended St Joseph's RC School and his daughter was a teacher at the school. He added that he had two other grandchildren who were looking forward to attending denominational schools in the future. He did not however consider that this amounted to an interest and advised that he would be participating in the item.

Councillor Grant made a general statement of transparency, advising that he had two children at Riverbank School and one child at St Machar Academy however he did not consider this required him to declare an interest in any of the items and would be participating in the business of the meeting.

DEPUTATIONS - ITEM 10.5 DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

2. The Convener advised that three deputations had been requested in relation to item 10.5 on the agenda (Denominational Primary Schools) – from Elizabeth Spencer, Anthony Steppie and JJ Welsh.

The Committee firstly heard from Elizabeth Spencer, who thanked Members for the opportunity to speak on behalf of all Catholics in Aberdeen, as well as for minorities in the city. She advised that she currently headed a social enterprise called Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group and had been working as a community researcher in Aberdeen for the past two years. She explained that her daughter attended St Joseph's RC School and so the denominational school feasibility study had been close to her heart. Ms Spencer stated that she had started a petition online for the need for a secondary Catholic school as well as for more funding for more primary Catholic schools in Aberdeen. She explained that she found it very difficult to send her daughter to a school which was 1.7 miles away, and therefore she would like there to be more primary Catholic schools in the city, noting that she would therefore also like her daughter to attend a Catholic secondary school when the time came.

She added that in Scotland, Aberdeen was the only city without a Catholic secondary school, and despite staying in the city for 13 years, she did not understand why that was the case. She noted that it might have been because there was not much need for one a decade earlier, but due to an influx of migration, students and migrant communities, there were now almost 140 nationalities in Aberdeen. Due to the research she had undertaken over the past two years with migrant communities, minorities and religious minorities, she had found a gap in the need for a secondary Catholic school, which had become the basis of her petition. She added that she hoped everyone would be supporting positive action for minorities, given the recent spate of race riots in the UK, noting that Aberdeen needed to show solidarity towards

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

minorities, and the religious minorities in the city. Identifying funding to start the first secondary Catholic school in the city would show that solidarity from a city which she noted was welcoming to migrants, oil workers, international students and international minorities. She felt that this would show that Aberdeen cared about their needs, and concluded by stating that a secondary Catholic school was really needed and she called on all present to help make the dream a reality.

The Committee then heard from Anthony Steppie, chair of Holy Family RC School Parent Council. Mr Steppie thanked the Committee for letting him speak, and advised that both the Parent Council and the school were very much against any faith school either closing or merging with another. However, he stated that he was in attendance to talk about Holy Family. He noted that it was a special school which had been in the city for a long time and had taught many citizens in Aberdeen. He advised that his two children attended Holy Family School, despite the fact they stayed in Mastrick and there were five schools in closer proximity. He explained that he chose to put his children there because he was a person of faith, but also because of the education they received. He stated that the education, such as Maths, English, Geography etc was good, as was the moral education, and he was very glad to see that had been acknowledged in the report. However he noted that it was more than the moral education, it was the way the children were taught about fellow human beings. It was how they were taught tolerance, empathy, how to treat each other, how to have self respect and how to have respect for other people. He added that in this day and age, that was something to be cherished, and the children at the school were happier. He stated that they did not want their school going anywhere. He had been involved in the school for a long time and it had only got better over the years. Mr Steppie invited Members to come to the school and see how happy the children there were. He added that Aberdeen was a great place to live and a brilliant place to bring up children. He concluded by highlighting the statement at the end of Holy Family School's newsletters, that they were a small school with a big heart.

Finally, the Committee heard from JJ Welsh, who advised that he was addressing Committee on behalf of St Joseph's RC School, the parents and the Parent Council. He added that his former guidance teacher had told him "Save our schools, because, after all, without good education, the future is lost". He explained that as a collective parents' group across the three denominational schools, they were disappointed with the feasibility study and how it had been put together. He added that it had been difficult to view the consultation on a phone and see what it was actually about.

He noted that it was important to get the facts correct, and he was pleased to see that the report highlighted the mistakes and the errors that were made, that there were some communication issues and that there were some things that were out of date. He advised that parents had been concerned over the Summer period as to whether or not their children would have a school to go to, and he felt this was very unfair. He considered that the way the consultation had been put together had created that concern, when there was no need for it to happen. He felt that if there had been better engagement with the community in general and in the three schools, the wording of the

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

feasibility study could have been changed to alleviate a lot of the concerns, and he believed there was a lesson to be learned from that by the schools and by the Council.

He explained that there was a multi-ethnic community of pupils at all denominational schools in Aberdeen. He added that there was a perception that those with a baptism certificate would be given places first, but it was important to realise that the facts showed a different picture. The number of Roman Catholic children at St Joseph's RC School was around 50/50, based on current numbers available, and he added that it was important to get that information across. Many people from different places had chosen to put their children to a faith-based school, no matter their own religion, because they believed in the interests of their child and what they felt they would get from the school. He added that it was also important to highlight that the catchment area for the denominational schools was west of Peterculter and south of Portlethen, which meant it extended into Aberdeenshire, but Aberdeenshire did not have any Roman Catholic primary schools. Therefore there were parents who drove from Stonehaven each day to take their children to school as they were outwith the area. Some parents could not afford to do this. Mr Welsh added that this highlighted the importance of denominational schools and for people to have a choice and for it to be available for them.

He added that consideration also needed to be given to the new housing developments in the areas he had mentioned, and whether the Council was giving any consideration to other faiths and other areas where new families might move. He asked if the Council was saying it should be reducing the number of schools that were available to people who were moving to the area. He did not believe this was right in any shape or form in the modern world and in a modern Scotland. He added that there was an argument potentially that there was a need for more denominational schools, not less.

Mr Welsh stated that there was no Catholic secondary school in Aberdeen, however there were 19,000 registered Catholics, not including those in Aberdeenshire. He explained that many parents were put off moving to Aberdeen by the lack of a secondary school. He noted that Dundee had an equivalent Catholic population to Aberdeen, but it had 12 Catholic primary schools and there was no intention at this time for any of them to be closed. Mr Welsh stated that the schools had a feeling of community, and enhanced, improved and maintained a mixed ethnic community. It was not just a school – it was about the future that Scotland should have.

Mr Welsh explained that St Joseph's RC School was an excellent school. He had two boys in Primary 1 and 3 at the school. He added that although he was biased, this was supported by the recent inspectorate report of the school which highlighted that children's overall attainment was consistently above the local and national expectations to maintain high levels of literacy and numeracy over time. This had been an ongoing position and the Head Teacher had been given special mention for her highly effective leadership.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

Mr Welsh added that the school was at bursting point and only the day before, another three children had joined. He noted that he asked the Head Teacher where there were spaces for these children, adding that there should not be more than 25 children in Primary 1 classes, and so if the school had over 434 children, was the Council saying it was acceptable that there should be 32 pupils in a class. He added that it was a Victorian building and the classrooms were not built to have that number. In some areas, class sizes had to be reduced to fit children in, and in others, numbers had to be increased.

Mr Welsh explained that the school was a listed Victorian building and there were things which needed to be done which could not wait another two years, as was set out in the report. This would not help the children today nor in the future. He added that this future should be invested in, and reminded the Council that when it took ownership of St Joseph's in 2015, it had stated that it would continue to invest in the school to maintain and increase the levels of education at the school. He said that what had actually been spent in the school since 2015 was a disgrace, and some of it had only come about because of the leaks and floods that had happened.

He added that he wanted to take the opportunity to highlight that as a Parent Council they had funds available, but due to red tape were not able to spend that money on improving the playground area. He asked that someone sit down with the Parent Council and explain how they could overcome this to make improvements to the condition of the school, and extended an invitation to Members to visit the school. Mr Welsh added that he could guarantee that the gymnasium at Members' schools was probably more modern than they had at St Joseph's.

He asked that Members did not make decisions about the school based on what they may have heard, but asked that they came to visit for themselves, as it was a very welcoming and open school. It was important for Members to see what their decisions were doing.

Mr Welsh concluded by saying that he was very pleased to see that the report highlighted that there was no recommendation to close any of the denominational schools. He highlighted his earlier question, that perhaps there should in fact be more. However, he stressed that it was not helping children or their education to sit and see what happened over the next two years. The focus should be on today's young people, with investment in them and their education. He understood that the Council had a very difficult decision to make in balancing budgets, but ultimately he felt that children should be put first. He finished by stating that the Council should keep its schools, especially the good ones.

Members asked a number of questions of each deputation.

The Committee resolved:-

to thank Ms Spencer, Mr Steppie and Mr Welsh for their contributions.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 2 JULY 2024

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

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

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

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Clerk would liaise with the Executive Director and her team to assign dates or explanations to the reports in the planner where the date for reporting back was to be confirmed;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning would present a report to the November meeting on the Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan and that officers would ensure this was added to the business planner;
- (iii) to note the reasons outlined in the planner for the delay to items 4 (National Children with Disabilities Thematic Inspection) and 5 (Children's Social Work Workforce Planning); and
- (iv) to otherwise note the business planner.

NOTICE OF MOTION - COUNCILLOR MCLEOD

5. The Committee had before it a Notice of Motion by Councillor McLeod in the following terms:-

That Committee:-

- (a) note the number of privately educated children at independent schools in Aberdeen. The latest estimate was approximately 2530;
- (b) note the number of state secondary schools in Aberdeen that were at full capacity was 2;
- (c) note the number of state secondary schools in Aberdeen at 90 – 100% capacity was 4;
- (d) note the policy of the UK Labour Government to apply VAT on private school fees;
- (e) note the report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies that, as a result of this, between 3% and 7% of privately educated children may be forced to leave and look for places in state schools. If this figure was correct then that equated to between 75 and 175 pupils looking to be placed in Aberdeen schools; and

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

- (f) instructs the Executive Director Families and Communities to bring back a report within one cycle about any arrangements regarding these placements and an analysis of the impact of this Labour policy.

Councillor McLeod, seconded by Councillor Brooks, moved the Notice of Motion.

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

That the Committee:-

- (a) agree the majority of parents/guardians in Aberdeen chose to ensure their children were educated by the local authority;
- (b) agree Aberdeen City Council was extremely competent in delivering education throughout the city, thanks to the dedicated staff who are employed within our schools;
- (c) agree that the UK Labour Government's decision to apply VAT on private schools should bring an estimated £150 million in Barnett consequential to the Scottish Government which could result in employing 1800 new teachers across Scotland;
- (d) note the position of the First Minister John Swinney who said that the SNP supported the policy to introduce VAT on private independent schools; and
- (e) agree to take no action in respect to this motion.

The Convener, seconded by the Vice Convener, moved as a further amendment:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) note that the Education service regularly met independent school Head Teachers where there was sharing of information on pupil numbers; and encourage continuation of this engagement;
- (b) appreciate the anxiety caused to schools and families in the city by the proposal to introduce VAT on Independent school fees;
- (c) note that the proposed legislation on VAT on independent school fees was likely to impact more on primary than secondary schools and that there was more flexibility in Council primary school capacities;
- (d) note that there was discussion and analysis of impact on local authorities of the proposed legislation at Scottish national level and that the impact of independent school sector contracting had so far resulted in marginal consequences on the local authority sector and encourage continuation of this engagement;
- (e) note that there was ongoing tracking of placing requests of pupils coming from the independent sector; and
- (f) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to prepare a service update to respond to the motion.

In terms of Standing Order 29.21, the first vote was taken between the Notice of Motion by Councillor McLeod and the amendment by Councillor Blake.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

On a division, there voted:- for the Notice of Motion (3) – Councillors Brooks, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; for the amendment by Councillor Blake (4) – Councillors Blake and Grant; Ms Barclay and Mr Regmi; declined to vote (13) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Allard, Hazel Cameron, Delaney, Hutchison, MacGregor and Radley; and Mr Haywood, Ms Munro, Dr Murray, Mr Murray and Mrs Smith.

In terms of Standing Order 29.21.1, the Committee therefore moved to the next item of business.

The Committee resolved:-

to adopt the amendment by Councillor Blake.

ABERDEEN CITY NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK PLAN - F&C/24/266

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval to implement the refreshed Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan for 2024/25, following submission of the Self-Evaluation and Plan to the Scottish Government.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the service Self-Evaluation and Plan contained in Appendix A;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to implement the proposed Aberdeen City National Improvement Framework Plan 24/25; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to maintain a review of the 24/25 Plan in light of any impacting national legislative or policy provisions through the education reform agendas and advise Committee of any required changes in due course.

During the discussion on the report, Dr Murray advised for reasons of transparency, she ran a peer support group for children and parents, however she did not consider this to be an interest which required to be declared and would prevent her from participating in the item.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to the implementation of the revised Anti-Bullying Policy, to note that the lead officer monitored data by school on a monthly basis and followed this up with schools to consider any changes or anomalies in the data, and understand what was being done as mitigation; and to note that the Executive Director had undertaken to include a question in the next health and wellbeing survey around how satisfied young people were with how bullying situations had been resolved under the revised Policy;

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

- (ii) in relation to the query around the provision of National 5 over two years (namely how many academies had switched to this; the increased proportion of National 5 presentations expected in 2025; and whether modelling had been undertaken on what was expected to happen to the pass rate as a result), to note that the Executive Director would provide a response to Members outwith the meeting;
- (iii) to note that a service update in respect of the work around Healthy Weight was expected to be circulated in October;
- (iv) to congratulate staff and pupils at Riverbank School on winning the Scots Bairns Book of the Year for *Summer e Magic Scurry*, and to note that officers would consider how best to publicise where the book was available to purchase;
- (v) in relation to the Youth Climate Group, to note that officers would provide an update to Members outwith the meeting on the work of the group, particularly in relation to any work undertaken on whole school environmental efficiencies; and
- (vi) to approve the recommendations.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK REPORT - CORS/24/274

7. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the status of key quarterly and annual performance measures relating to the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's and Families Clusters.

The report recommended:-

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

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

INSPECTION REPORTING - F&C/24/267

8. 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 published since the last meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of this 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 approved at Committee in July 2024.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would pass on the Committee's congratulations to Seaton School Nursery in Aberdeen for being announced as the top performing nursery in Scotland for 2024; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

MUSIC SERVICE UPDATE - F&C/24/212

9. With reference to article 5 of the minute of its meeting of 12 September 2023, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented an update following the instruction to officers to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and to report back on progress within one calendar year. The report provided an evaluative overview of the progress made over the 2023/24 academic session.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to continue to extend opportunities for music making through partnership working between the Music Service and Aberdeen City Music School and others; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report back on progress in one calendar year.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would include data about tuition at primary school level broken down by school in the next report; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE POLICY - F&C/24/235

10. With reference to article 13 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 for the reviewed and refreshed Aberdeen City Council School Age Childcare Policy.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the work undertaken with key stakeholders to review and refresh the Aberdeen City Council Out of School Care Policy, in line with national policy and updated guidance; and
- (b) approve the School Age Childcare Policy and the Agreement (Appendices 1 and 2), which had been reviewed for approval by the Council's Policy Group and Risk Board.

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

At this juncture, Councillor Grant made a transparency statement in connection with the following item, noting that he had been involved in discussions with partners around some of what was in the report through his previous role as City Centre Manager with Aberdeen Inspired. He did not consider that this amounted to a declaration and advised that he would be remaining in the meeting.

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN - F&C/24/269

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the outcome of the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Review, on progress towards delivery of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024 and shared a proposed interim Plan for 2024-25.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the CLD review and the recommended outcomes to be realised;
- (b) note the progress made towards delivery of the Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024;
- (c) approve the proposed interim Plan; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to present an updated 2 year CLD Plan to the Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2025.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to "Empowering our Gypsy Traveller community", to note that officers would contact the Adult Learning team to ascertain what work was being done with those travellers who did not use the Gypsy Traveller site and (a) share this with Members outwith the meeting and (b) include detail on this in future reports; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

SCHOOL ESTATE PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE - F&C/24/265

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the 2024 annual update to the School Estate Plan, provided updates on progress with implementation of the Plan, and highlighted new

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

priorities which had emerged since the School Estate Plan was first approved in September 2022.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the updates to the School Estate Plan which were provided at Appendix A of the report;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Plan in accordance with the updated timeline, presented within Appendix A of the report;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a review of spaces currently available within schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs, and in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning, to report back to the Committee with recommendations for improving such spaces where this was required; and
- (d) agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets and instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to proceed with this review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Clark, moved:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) agree recommendations 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and replace 2.4 as follows:
 - agree that the aim and priority of the asset review in Northfield was to invest in the area and enhance community and learning provision locally and there would be no detrimental impact on services;
 - note that the Community Campus Model, approved by Committee in November 2021 was a community-based education model that ensured improved learning environments and opportunities for our children and young people;
 - note that the Family Support Model, approved by Committee in July 2024, aimed to empower residents, build trust and consistent relationships through support that was flexible and responsive to local needs;
 - agree that the Northfield Community asset review would encompass the principles of both the Community Campus Model and the Family Support Model to deliver services for our children and families in line with our commitment to drive targeted improvement in our SIMD1 quintiles;
 - agree that new purpose-built learning environments in Northfield would represent an appropriate opportunity to meet the inclusion needs of primary and secondary pupils;
 - agree the intended scope of the proposed asset review in Northfield to include all public assets, and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

Landlord to proceed with the review and to commence engagement with all partners working in the wider Northfield area;

- instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to work closely with the Northfield community throughout this process to ensure community empowerment and resilience was prioritised in all stages of planning; and
- instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to work with the Northfield Advisory Group to invite and support their guidance in shaping improvements and outcomes.

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

That the Committee:-

- (a) note the updates to the School Estate Plan which were provided at Appendix A of the report;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to implement the School Estate Plan in accordance with the updated timeline, presented within Appendix A of the report, as amended;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a review of spaces currently available within schools for supporting pupils with additional support needs, and in consultation with the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning, to report back to the Committee with recommendations for improving such spaces where this was required;
- (d) note that the Northfield primary school feasibility study consultation closed in June 2023. Parents and guardians had been waiting for over a year and the revised timeline meant that the earliest any decisions would be made was September 2025 with the budget decision in March 2027;
- (e) note that the published School Roll forecast was out of date, dated from 2020 and had not been updated due to the unpredictability of the Aberdeen city school roll. There had been a 10% increase in the roll since the forecast was published and it was anticipated that there would be continued fluctuations due to global events;
- (f) agree that it was unacceptable for parents and guardians of Northfield ASG primary school children to have continued uncertainty and delay and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to cease work on the primary school feasibility study (N2); and
- (g) as per the instruction from Education and Children's Services Committee on 20 February 2024:
 - 2.1.1 *instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to carry out a detailed options appraisal for the long term future of Northfield Academy, with a view to providing a solution to address the presence of RAAC within the building*
 - 2.1.2 *agree that there will be active engagement with the local community and young people;*

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

- (h) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to bring a report to the Education and Children’s Services Committee in February 2025.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (9) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Allard, Clark, Delaney, MacGregor, McLellan and Radley; and Ms Barclay; for the amendment (6) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; and Ms Munro; declined to vote (2) – Mr Haywood and Mr Murray; absent from the division (3) – Dr Murray, Mr Regmi and Mrs Smith.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Executive Director had suggested that the report due to be presented to the Communities, Housing and Public Protection Committee in November on a detailed phased Implementation Plan reflecting plans for internal zoning of the Central Library and testing of the Library and Information Service as an integral part of the emerging model of Family Support which would incorporate plans for ongoing engagement with communities and groups could also be presented to the November meeting of this Committee if it was felt this would be beneficial; and
- (ii) to adopt the motion.

At this juncture, Councillor Grant intimated that he wished to refer the matter to Council, under Standing Order 34.1. He was supported in this regard by Councillors Blake, Brooks, McLeod and Mrs Stewart, and Mr Haywood and Ms Munro. The Convener advised that he was exercising his right under Standing Order 34.1 to determine that the matter would not be referred. Councillor Grant advised that he wished to record his dissent with this decision.

At this juncture, the Convener sought Committee agreement to suspend Standing Order 40.2 to enable the rest of the business to be considered that day. The Committee agreed to suspend Standing Order 40.2.

DENOMINATIONAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEASIBILITY STUDY - F&C/24/264

13. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided a summary of the outcomes of a recent feasibility study to assess the options for the long term future of denominational primary school provision in the city, and sought approval of the next steps. The report also detailed the findings of a stakeholder engagement exercise carried out to support the feasibility study.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the contents of the report, and instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor forecast pupil numbers for the three denominational primary schools, and to include recommendations in next year’s annual school estate plan update report on any required actions to be taken to ensure that the

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

city's denominational primary school provision continued to be appropriate to meet the expected demand for pupil places.

The Convener, seconded by the Vice Convener, moved the recommendation as set out in the report.

Mr Murray, seconded by Councillor Blake, moved as an amendment:-

That the Committee:-

- (a) notes the content of the report;
- (b) regrets the lack of a proper and open consultation with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic Secondary School in Aberdeen;
- (c) welcomes the pause in recommending any changes to the Roman Catholic school estate;
- (d) agrees to recommend to Full Council that it establish a working group consisting of representatives from Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, representatives from the Catholic Church, parent representatives and staff representatives. This group would work in a spirit of cooperation and partnership to explore what is an appropriate level of provision of Catholic schools in the city and produce a costed plan as to how this level of provision might be realised;
- (e) instructs the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers at all three primary schools and report back on this and the findings of the above working group to the Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2025;
- (f) decides to take the opportunity provided by this pause to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to engage with all the people of Aberdeen on the possibility of establishing a Catholic secondary school in the city; and
- (g) agrees that the pause proposed in the paper will in no way delay the urgently needed work to provide for the refurbishment of St. Peter's School.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (8) – the Convener; the Vice Convener; Councillors Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney, Hutchison, MacGregor and McLellan; for the amendment (9) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant, McLeod and Mrs Stewart; and Ms Barclay, Mr Haywood, Ms Munro and Mr Murray; absent from the division (3) – Dr Murray, Mr Regmi and Mrs Smith.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that officers circulate information to Members outwith the meeting on the list of projects in the Condition and Suitability programme which had led to improvements being made at St Joseph's RC School and Holy Family RC School since 2016; and
- (ii) to adopt the amendment.

At this juncture, the Convener advised that he wished to refer the matter to Council under Standing Order 34.1. He was supported in this regard by the

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
17 September 2024

Vice Convener and Councillors Hazel Cameron, Clark, Delaney, MacGregor and McLellan.

At this juncture, the External Members left the meeting.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK STATISTICS - F&C/24/270

14. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which set out the Children's Social Work Statistics, Scotland 2022-23 report and provided a commentary on the performance of Aberdeen City Council compared with the national position.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note that care experienced children and those children who needed protection in Aberdeen City, were, predominantly, receiving care and protection in line with national averages;
- (b) note that where performance differed from national averages, there were improvement plans in place; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to update the Education and Children's Services Committee on the 2023/24 Statistical Report following its publication in Spring 2025.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR MARTIN GREIG, Convener**