

## EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 12 November 2019. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Wheeler, Convener; Councillor Malik, Vice-Convener; Councillor Jennifer Stewart (to article 9), Depute Provost; and Councillors Alphonse, Boulton (as substitute for Councillor Stewart from article 10), Cameron, Cooke, Donnelly, Graham (as substitute for Councillor Lesley Dunbar), Greig, Hutchison, Imrie, Macdonald and MacGregor. External Members:- Mrs Stephanie Brock (Third Religious Representative), Mrs Louise Bruce (Parent Representative - Primary Schools), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Anthony Rafferty (Parent Representative - Secondary Schools) and Miss Pamela Scott (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be found [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.

### WELCOME

1. The Convener welcomed Councillor MacGregor, who had replaced Councillor Nicoll, to the Committee.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. The Committee noted the following declaration of interest intimated at this stage:-

Mrs Stephanie Brock declared an interest in item 10.5 (Orchard Brae) as she had a child who attended Orchard Brae School, but did not consider that the nature of her interest required her to leave the meeting during consideration of that item.

### MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 17 September 2019 for approval.

### The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in respect of article 7 (Statutory Consultation Reports – Countesswells / Milltimber Schools), to note that it had subsequently been clarified following the previous meeting that the responsibility for the business cases sat with the Chief Officer – Capital, rather than the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord, and as such, there was now no requirement for the business cases to be reported to the City Growth and Resources Committee as advised at the last meeting, as the Chief Officer – Capital had been given delegated authority to proceed with the business cases at the Council Budget meeting in March 2019; and

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- (ii) to approve the minute as a correct record.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER**

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

**The Committee resolved:-**  
to note the updates provided.

### **DEPUTATION**

5. In relation to item 10.3 on the agenda (Supporting Children's Learning in an Empowered System) the Committee heard from Dr Alison Murray, who advised that she helped to run a parent/carer support group; Autism and Other Conditions Aberdeen. She noted that she had previously attended Committee in January 2019 to give a deputation in respect of the previous report 'The Inclusion Review and Out of Authority Placements' where Committee had requested the report that was before Members for consideration.

Dr Murray advised that she had felt it important to gather evidence on how inclusion was working in schools in Aberdeen from the perspective of parents and carers of children with additional support needs. She noted that the officer report presented to Committee did not reflect the view of parents/carers or children. The survey report had been circulated to Members.

Dr Murray stated that the Council had a duty to secure that the education of children and young people was directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential. There was a presumption that this education should be provided in a mainstream setting and Dr Murray noted that this must be delivered within an inclusive approach. She added that the Council also had a public sector duty to proactively ensure that pupils with disabilities were not treated less favourably and the Council should take reasonable steps to avoid putting those children at a disadvantage and to ensure equality of opportunity in learning. Furthermore, she stated that the Council should consider the promotion of wellbeing of children. Since January, Dr Murray advised that the Scottish Government had produced their final guidance on the presumption to provide education in a mainstream setting. The guidance gave four key features of inclusion, namely Present, Participating, Achieving and Supported, and suggested that they could be used to evaluate whether inclusive practices were in place.

Dr Murray explained that, in consultation with the Autism and Other Conditions Aberdeen members, she had developed an anonymous survey in order to assess the success of inclusion from a parent/carer perspective. The survey had been advertised by various means and had run from 2 to 31 October 2019. The survey asked respondents to

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consider how their child had managed in school over the last year. Dr Murray advised that a total of 147 responses had been received from parents of children with additional support needs in mainstream schools in Aberdeen. Autism spectrum disorder had been the most common cause of additional support need with 95 responses, which represented almost 20% of children with autism in mainstream schools in Aberdeen. This had been followed by ADHD, learning disability and dyslexia. Over half of the children had more than one condition.

Dr Murray advised that of those surveyed, more than 27% of children did not attend school full time, with over 12% attending half time or less, with reasons given including part-time timetables. Dr Murray noted that part-time timetables should not be used for more than six weeks and should always have a plan to get the child back to full-time education, however the survey responses had stated that part-time attendance was reported as lasting up to seven years with a median time of 14 months in primary school and 1 year in secondary schools. Dr Murray added that if a child was unable to attend school, they were still entitled to receive a full education. However, when asked what alternatives were provided for when children were not in school, 87% of respondents had stated that no alternative was provided. The maximum input reported had been two and a half hours per week. Dr Murray further noted that all exclusions from school required to be formally recorded, and that children should not be sent home informally, as that was unlawful exclusion. However Dr Murray stated that the responses showed that 30% of pupils had experienced that, with 10% being unlawfully excluded most weeks, and a few most days. 17% of respondents had reported that their children had been formally excluded from school in the last year, often multiple times.

Dr Murray advised that of the responses given, nearly two thirds of children spent time away from their mainstream class, with 23% spending half their time or less with their class. She added that this was most commonly to attend a support room or for a targeted activity such as therapy or 1:1 time with a Pupil Support Assistant. However, Dr Murray explained that of those who had responded, a quarter of pupils spent time out of class for non-specific activities, such as sitting in the corridor, foyer, office or running around the school. 7% of children also needed the relief of a quiet area. She noted that the time out of class came at a cost as they were not fully participating in class activities. The survey respondents stated that the school environment was considered poor or very poor at meeting their child's needs in 36% of cases. In 28% of cases, spaces that children accessed away from their class due to their additional support need did not meet their needs either, and Dr Murray advised that size, noise, distractions, isolation, and embarrassment were given as reasons why these spaces were unsuitable. Dr Murray stated that the Council was required to have, and implement, an accessibility strategy to increase the extent pupils with disabilities can participate in a school's curriculum. However, she stated that a Freedom of Information request in April 2019 had received the reply that Aberdeen City Council did not have an accessibility strategy in place.

Dr Murray stated that friendships were important for the wellbeing of children. A quarter of children whose parents/carers had responded were reported not to have friends in school and over half did not meet with school friends outside school. 46% of respondents

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reported that their children never or only occasionally joined in with peer activities at break and lunchtime, and over 55% of responses stated that their child had experienced bullying within the last year.

Dr Murray added that respondents stated that one in five children had missed out on school trips due to lack of support or planning or because the school had asked them not to attend, and a further 7% were only able to go because parents had accompanied them.

Over a quarter of parents who had responded reported that their child struggled to follow lessons in class; only 17% were confident that they were able to follow all their lessons. Only 5% of parents had felt their child received enough support to prepare for life outside school, and 40% had not received enough communication from school to be able to answer this question.

Dr Murray added that Councils were required to identify and provide support to enable children with additional support needs to overcome barriers to learning. However, of those who had responded, 34% of children did not have an education plan in place, and a further 8% of parents did not know if they did. The majority of those with a plan had had a review within the last six months. Dr Murray explained that two-thirds of parents were happy with school communication, however 21% of parents did not feel listened to by the school or included in decisions about their child and only 29% said the schools asked them for their views. 45% of parents who had responded were not satisfied that their child received the correct support in school. Nearly three-quarters of parents who had responded felt they did not have enough information about their child's rights or where to go for support. Dr Murray stated that this information was not clearly publicised by the Council, despite a duty to do so. She added that the education of children with ASN must be directed towards them reaching their fullest potential, yet only 21% parents thought they were achieving that potential. Nearly two thirds of parents who had responded did not feel their child was reaching their full potential in school. When the survey had asked parents to describe their experience of their child's education, Dr Murray noted that the most commonly used words were frustrating, stressful and poor.

Dr Murray suggested that the results of the survey showed that Aberdeen City Council had a lot of work to do to develop an inclusive practice in schools. She acknowledged that the report "Supporting Children's Learning in an Empowered System" recognised some of these difficulties, including the lack of capacity to deliver inclusion. However, she stated that it did not consider child outcomes or engage with parents during its production, and did not propose doing so moving forward, despite the direction from the Mainstreaming guidelines that 'families should be consulted in a meaningful way when staff are looking at progression from their services'.

Dr Murray noted that the ability to provide an inclusive service, and meet the needs of children, was also hampered by the apparent problems with staff retention within the Educational Psychology service which had led to a halving of numbers of posts in just a couple of years, and suggested that the high rate departure of staff would also impact of attracting new staff. She added that the Support Group felt that there should be a rapid

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external investigation into the causes of that, and concluded that the Council urgently needed to develop, implement and monitor an Additional Support for Learning policy that ensured children with additional support needs received education in a manner conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development.

Members asked a number of questions of Dr Murray.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to thank Dr Murray for her deputation.

**CLUSTER RISK REGISTER - INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S AND FAMILY SERVICES - OPE/19/410**

6. With reference to article 7 of the minute of its meeting of 6 November 2018, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Integrated Children’s and Family Services which presented the Cluster Risk Register and Assurance Maps in accordance with the Committee Terms of Reference.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

note the Cluster Risk Register and Assurance Maps set out in Appendix A to the report.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

**EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY - 2018/19 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TRACKING REPORT - COM/19/411**

7. With reference to article 5 of the minute of its meeting of 16 May 2019, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Business Intelligence and Performance Management which provided an interim tracking report for the 2018-19 academic year against the suite of performance indicator measures which supported the Excellence and Equity agenda within the ACC National Improvement Framework Plan.

**The report recommended:-**

that the Committee –

(a) note the content of the report; and

(b) endorse the approach taken to data presentation as captured in Appendices A and B.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

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**SCHOOL HOLIDAY PATTERN 2020 TO 2025 - OPE/19/395**

8. With reference to article 6 of the minute of its meeting of 16 May 2019, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Education Officer which presented the outcome of the further consultation exercise which had been undertaken to ascertain if the summer holiday period should be brought forward by a week in future years.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

- (a) note the consultation approach and subsequent feedback on the summer holiday pattern 2020-21 to 2024-25;
- (b) agree to maintain the current holiday pattern for the next five years with no change to the timing of the summer school holiday; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Operating Officer to publish details of the holiday pattern up to 2025 as detailed in Appendix A.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to approve the recommendations; and
- (ii) to agree that officers would commence the consultation on the next school holiday dates in three years' time.

**STRATEGIES TO MANAGE OUT OF AUTHORITY RESIDENTIAL PLACEMENTS - OPE/19/414**

9. With reference to article 6 of the minute of its meeting of 17 January 2019, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Education Officer which set out Aberdeen City Council's strategies to manage Out of Authority residential places.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

- (a) endorse the work being progressed across Integrated Children and Family Services to mitigate against the use of Out of Authority residential placements; and
- (b) note the changes made to service delivery to support a rebalancing of the care profile of the City's looked after children.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendations.

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**SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN AN EMPOWERED SYSTEM - OPE/19/415**

**10.** With reference to article 6 of the minute of its meeting of 17 January 2019, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Education Officer which provided an overview of a consultation which had been undertaken with staff to determine the effectiveness of current approaches in meeting the needs of those with Additional Support Needs, and made recommendations on how to further strengthen the system as the Council worked towards an empowered system.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

- (a) note the consultation undertaken with staff and the broad messages fed back as part of this consultation exercise, and instruct the Chief Operating Officer to work with staff in schools and Trade Unions to address the key themes emerging from the consultation in order to build a stronger universal, targeted and specialist provision; and
- (b) as part of the above engagement with colleagues, instruct the Chief Operating Officer to review the current provision of targeted and specialist support to ensure that it is reshaped to meet current and future demand; and report on progress at the March meeting of this Committee.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) in response to questions around a breakdown of the figures available for children with Additional Support Needs who were registered as having a disability, to note that officers would circulate information that was currently available to Members outwith the meeting; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

**EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ADMISSIONS POLICY 2020 - OPE/19/416**

**11.** The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Integrated Children's and Family Services which sought approval of the new Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Admissions Policy, which took account of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion and Aberdeen City Council's commitment to deliver the increased entitlement of up to 1140 hours of funded ELC provision by August 2020.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

approve the revised Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020, and instruct the Chief Operating Officer to implement the policy with effect from 1 December 2019.

**The Committee resolved:-**

to approve the recommendation.

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**ORCHARD BRAE - OPE/19/426**

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Integrated Children’s and Family Services which provided information on the range of support being afforded to Orchard Brae School following the inspection by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate which had been published on 2 July 2019.

**The report recommended:-**

that Committee –

- (a) note the contents of this report; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Operating Officer to continue to support the school to address the recommendations made by Education Scotland.

**The Committee resolved:-**

- (i) to note that officers would circulate the follow-up report from Education Scotland to Members outwith the meeting when it was available;
- (ii) to thank Caroline Stirton and her staff and officers for the work that had gone in to addressing the original recommendations and to commend them for the improvement in the follow up inspection; and
- (iii) to approve the recommendations.

- **COUNCILLOR JOHN WHEELER, Convener**