

EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 26 November 2024. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Greig, Convener; and Councillors Allard, Blake, Bouse, Brooks, Hazel Cameron, Fairfull, Grant, MacGregor, McLeod, McRae (as substitute for Councillor Mennie) and Radley. External Members:- Mr Doug Haywood (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools) (for articles 1 to 12, Ms Jacqueline Munro (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools) (for articles 1 to 6 and 8 to 12), Dr Alison Murray (Parent Representative - Secondary) (for articles 1 to 12) and Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative) (for articles 1 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. The following declarations and transparency statements were intimated:-
 - Councillor Blake made a transparency statement in respect of item 10.2 (Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan) as she had two children who attended local authority schools;
 - Councillor Grant made a transparency statement to advise that he had children at Riverbank School and St Machar Academy;
 - Dr Murray made a transparency statement that she ran a peer support group and had a child who had additional support needs and
 - Mr Murray made a transparency statement he had two grandchildren who attended St Joseph's RC School and his daughter was a teacher at the school.

None of the above Members considered that these amounted to interests which required declarations to be made.

- Ms Munro declared an interest in item 9.4 (Inspection Reporting) due to her employment at Harlaw Academy and advised that she would withdraw from the meeting for that item and would not participate in any deliberation or discussion.

MINUTE OF MEETING OF 17 SEPTEMBER 2024

2. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 18 September 2024 for approval.

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The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the correction to Dr Murray's transparency statement in respect of item 10.4 (School Estate Plan), namely that she had a child who attended private school, rather than primary school; and
- (ii) to otherwise 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.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the reason outlined in the planner for the delay to item 8 (Corporate Parenting Annual Report) and that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support had advised that he expected the report to be presented to Committee in early 2025;
- (ii) to note that the updates on the behaviour action plan would be presented as part of the regular performance reports; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the planner.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK/NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK PROGRESS UPDATE - CORS/24/338

4. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented (a) the status of key quarterly and annual performance measures relating to the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's and Families Clusters; (b) early reflections against the initial release of 2024 Senior Phase attainment and achievement data through the Insight benchmarking tool; and (c) a progress update against the 2024/25 National Improvement Framework for Aberdeen City Council.

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 note that the Executive Director – Families and Communities would arrange for information to be issued to Members outwith the meeting on the provision of mentoring in various schools;
- (ii) in relation to page 43 of the report, and the figures which demonstrated that employment remained at a level which was below that of most other authorities, to note that Members had suggested it would be helpful to have a comparison with figures for other local authorities with universities and colleges; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

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5. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Corporate Services which presented the annual report of the Education and Children's Services Committee to enable Members to provide comment on the data contained within.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) provide comments and observations on the data contained within the annual report; and
- (b) note the annual report of the Education and Children's Services Committee.

The Convener, seconded by Councillor Allard, moved the recommendations contained in the report.

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

That the Committee –

- (a) note the annual report of the Education and Children's Services Committee;
- (b) note that, at the September 2024 meeting of the Education and Children's Services Committee, the will of the Committee was seriously undermined by the Convener when he referred the final decision to Full Council, in relation to the Denominational Primary Schools Feasibility Study; and
- (c) agree that this Committee is not at its most effective when the will of Committee, its External Members and communities are ignored.

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (8) – the Convener; and Councillors Allard, Bouse, Hazel Cameron, Fairfull, MacGregor, McRae and Radley; for the amendment (8) – Councillors Blake, Brooks, Grant and McLeod; and Mr Haywood, Ms Munro, Dr Murray and Mr Murray.

There being an equality of votes, in terms of Standing Order 32.7, the Convener exercised his casting vote in favour of the motion.

The Committee resolved:-

to adopt the motion.

CLUSTER RISK REGISTERS AND ASSURANCE MAPS - F&C/24/344

6. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps in accordance with the Education and Children's Services Committee Terms of Reference

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to provide assurance that risks were being managed effectively within the Education and Lifelong Learning and Children's Social Work and Family Support Clusters.

During discussion of the report, Councillor Radley made a transparency statement as she was a Council-appointed Board member of the Governors of Oakbank School.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the Cluster Risk Registers and Assurance Maps set out in appendices A and B.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the feedback from Members that some control actions might need to be reviewed to demonstrate the drive in the risk register to resolve the specific issue (an example given was the "Risk that the number of Senior Leadership vacancies leads to staff in posts that are not of required quality");
- (ii) to note that officers had undertaken to consider the feedback from Members that it would be helpful for the matrix to reflect the previous year's situation to allow for comparison and a clearer understanding of which risks had been effectively mitigated;
- (iii) in relation to page 119 of the report and the risk "The perception of failure to record incidents of violence and aggressive behaviour against school staff", to note that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning had undertaken to amend the wording to reflect that the while the behaviour plan had been developed completely, it was still being implemented, and so the entirety of the action was not yet complete;
- (iv) to note the feedback from Members in relation to the phrasing of the risk "Child Migration including unaccompanied asylum seeking children and young people (UASC) and all families requiring resettlement or with no recourse to public funds" and that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Services had undertaken to review this wording for the next report;
- (v) in relation to the control actions for the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry (SCAI) risk, to note that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Services had undertaken to ensure that details were up to date in respect of those actions still to be closed off, but to note that the risk would likely be carried forward due to the timescales in relation to the Inquiry; and
- (vi) to otherwise note the report.

In accordance with her declaration of interest made under article 1, Ms Munro left the meeting at this juncture, and took no part in the consideration of the following item.

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INSPECTION REPORTING - F&C/24/321

7. 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.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that updates on Harlaw Academy would be provided every second meeting, as per the updates on Northfield Academy;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning would issue a service update to Members outwith the meeting on what individual schools were implementing or had implemented in respect of mobile phones in the classroom;
- (iii) to note the content of the report;
- (iv) to 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;
- (v) to support and encourage the Harlaw Academy improvement journey, instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to issue a service update to Members in early to mid January 2025 with information on the timeline for actioning the three priorities; and agree that this information would be incorporated into the scheduled inspection reporting update to Committee on 18 February 2025;
- (vi) to note that Education Scotland said in their letter of 19 November that *“There have been very few improvements across the school since the last further inspection.”* This was despite intensive support from the central education team. And to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to review where opportunities were missed to identify the lack of progress, whether changes needed to be made to processes, procedures or the quality improvement framework and to report this back to Committee as part of the reset of the Quality Improvement Framework in July 2025; and
- (vii) to note that *“Young people are achieving at lower levels at Harlaw Academy across almost all national measures compared to learners with similar needs and backgrounds across Scotland”* and that the action plan identified reducing the number of presentations for young people at S4 from 8 to 6 courses to improve attainment and bring in line with national guidance. In light of this, to instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to issue a service update on the curriculum structure across the senior phase within secondary schools on

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attainment of the two year / eight course model across the city and consider whether there was a need to issue guidance to all local authority secondary schools.

SUMMER IN THE CITY PROGRAMME 2024 - F&C/24/318

8. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented a high level evaluation of the Summer in the City programme 2024.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the high level evaluation of the Summer in the City programme; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to report to Committee on the impact of the Autumn (2024) and Spring (2025) programmes through service update following delivery.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN - F&C/24/315

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which sought approval for the refreshed Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan (PIE) 2024-2027.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the evaluation of the Council's current state;
- (b) approve the new Parental Involvement and Engagement Plan; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to report progress through the regular updates provided to Committee on progress towards delivery of the National Improvement Framework Plan.

RIVERBANK SCHOOL EXCESS CAPACITY OPTIONS - F&C/24/329

10. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an assessment of the options available for making use of anticipated excess capacity at the new replacement Riverbank School building, which was expected to open in Spring 2025.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

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- (a) approve the proposal to relocate the Autism Outreach Service from the Ashgrove Children's Centre building, and to establish an Early Intervention Space at the new Riverbank School building, as outlined under Option 3 at Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers and use of space at the new Riverbank School building and to provide updates on any further action required in the future, through the annual School Estate Plan update reports.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve and welcome the proposal to relocate the Autism Outreach Service from the Ashgrove Children's Centre building, and to establish an Early Intervention Space at the new Riverbank School building, as outlined under Option 3 Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning to write to the parents of Riverbank Primary to confirm the timeline for the completion of school, the decant of St Peter's Primary to the existing school building and the plans for Autism Outreach Service; and
- (iii) to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to continue to monitor pupil numbers at Riverbank and the adjacent primary schools Sunnybank and St Peter's, the use of space at the new Riverbank School building and to provide updates on any further action required in the future, through the annual School Estate Plan update reports.

BEHAVIOUR ACTION PLAN - F&C/24/322

11. With reference to article 7 of the minute of its meeting of 30 April 2024, the Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which responded to the instruction to the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to review the adequacy of the current allocation of pupil support staffing and provision of specialist placements across the city; consider the output and report options for consideration back to the Education and Children's Services Committee within three cycles.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the continued hard work undertaken by Aberdeen City schools to provide creative, learner-centred support for learners across the city;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to develop a proposed operating model for a cost neutral time limited Early Intervention provision, to be based at Riverbank School for up to 10 primary children, and bring a firmer proposal to Committee for approval within 2 Committee cycles;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to work with Head Teachers to identify a solution that will allow Pupil Support Assistants to be released for professional learning; and

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- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Education and Lifelong Learning to append a summary of progress against the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Review recommendations and a summary of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Additional Support for Learning to the report being presented to Committee within two cycles.

During discussion of the report, Dr Murray made a transparency statement as her son had attended the language unit in Primary 1 and Primary 2.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Executive Director – Families and Communities had advised that the required additional support for learning information for parents and carers was available on the Council website, and that she would confirm that this was still the case;
- (ii) in relation to the chart on page 281 of the agenda pack (Percentage of Multiagency / Child's Plan by Associated School Group), to note that the Chief Officer – Education and Lifelong Learning had undertaken to review the data for Lochside Academy to ensure it was correct;
- (iii) to note that the Executive Director – Families and Communities would provide Ms Munro with the link to the Devolved School Management Scheme which provided details around the allocation of pupil support assistants to schools; and
- (iv) to approve the recommendations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM CARE INSPECTORATE THEMATIC REVIEW - DISABLED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES OF SOCIAL WORK SERVICES - F&C/24/330

12. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which provided an update on the findings of the Care Inspectorate Thematic Review, August 2024, in relation to Disabled Children and Young People's experiences of Social Work Services and of the actions being taken by the service to address the findings.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the Thematic Review;
- (b) approve the Action Plan (at Appendix A) developed to address findings and instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to report progress on delivering on the Key Findings in Autumn 2025; and
- (c) note that multi-agency learning from this Thematic Review would be used to inform the refresh of the Children's Services Plan.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

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At this juncture, the External Members left the meeting.

CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 - F&C/24/334

13. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented the Chief Social Work Officer's Annual Report for the year 2023/24. The report provided information on the role and responsibilities exercised by the Chief Social Work Officer; the delivery of statutory social work services and decision making in the period; and a progress report on key areas of social work provision within Aberdeen City.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the contents of the annual report, set out at Appendix 1.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support would circulate information to Members outwith the meeting on the Aberdeen Suicide Delivery Forum;
- (ii) to note that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support would circulate a service update to Members in respect of No Recourse to Public Funds and Support for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children; and
- (iii) to otherwise note the report.

KEEPING THE PROMISE - YEAR 3 EVALUATION - F&C/24/337

14. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which set out progress with the implementation of the Scottish Government's Plan 21-24 to keep The Promise.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the local progress made in Year Three of Plan 21-24 as outlined in the appendix report (Appendix 1);
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support to provide a report to Committee on the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 when it was published and on the proposed reporting arrangements for delivery of the plan; and
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support to provide a report to Committee updating the partnership's Corporate Parenting Plan to take account of the delivery plan for Plan 24-30 and for this to include the voice and views of Aberdeen City's care experienced children and young people.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations.

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ABERDEEN CITY'S CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24 - F&C/24/312

15. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented Aberdeen City's Child Protection Committee (CPC) Annual Report 2023-24 to provide assurance that the work of the CPC was effectively helping reduce risks to children and young people.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note the content of the CPC's Annual Report 2023-24, including the conclusion of the Child Protection Programme 2021-2024; and
- (b) instruct the Chief Social Work Officer to provide Committee with a further report in November 2025 detailing the continuing impact and effectiveness of partnership work in relation to child protection.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to request that officers ensure there was less use of acronyms in next year's report; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN (2024-2030) - F&C/24/331

16. The Committee had before it a report by the Executive Director Families and Communities which presented a Children's Social Work Workforce Plan (set out at Appendix A) designed to build the capacity needed to meet demand based on analysis of current and future need.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee –

- (a) note that the Workforce Plan available in Appendix A aligned with the vision, values and goals of the Children's Social Work service, and was in line with the Children's Services Plan 2023-2026;
- (b) note the focus on employee wellbeing as a necessary component to ensure the workforce grows in confidence and competence to meet the increasingly complex needs of the most vulnerable children and their families;
- (c) instruct the Chief Officer - Children's Social Work and Family Support to align the service Learning and Development programme to the workforce plan; and
- (d) instruct the Chief Officer - Children's Social Work and Family Support to present an evaluation of progress against the workforce plan to Committee in 2027.

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The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would build a 'how we will do it' column into the workforce plan;
 - (ii) to note that the potential impacts of the national social work agency were currently unclear but that the Chief Officer – Children's Social Work and Family Support would bring detail to Committee on this once clarity was available; and
 - (iii) to approve the recommendations.
- **COUNCILLOR MARTIN GREIG, Convener**