

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee

Tuesday, 20 February 2024

Council Chambers, Council Office, High Street, Elgin, IV30 1BX

PRESENT

Councillor James Allan, Mrs Sheila Brumby, Councillor Tracy Colyer, Mrs Anne Currie, Councillor John Divers, Mr Alfie Harper, Councillor Juli Harris, Councillor Sandy Keith, Councillor Scott Lawrence, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Ms Jillian MacKellar, Councillor Marc Macrae, Councillor Paul McBain, Councillor Bridget Mustard, Councillor Kathleen Robertson, Councillor Derek Ross, Mrs Susan Slater, Mrs Emma Tunnard, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor John Cowe, Councillor Shona Morrison, Reverend Tembu Rongong

IN ATTENDANCE

Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development); Head of Education; Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities; Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance; Head of Service/Chief Social Work Officer; Stewart McLauchlan, Quality Improvement Manager and Caroline O'Connor, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Kathleen Robertson.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Orders 21 and 23 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, there were no declarations from Group Leaders or Spokespersons in regard to any prior decisions taken on how Members will vote on any item on the agenda or any declarations of Member's interests in respect of any item on the agenda.

3. Welcome

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming Jillian MacKellar as the new Primary School Representative to her first meeting.

4. Resolution

The meeting resolved that in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for Items 16 and 17 of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information of the class described in the relevant Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

Para Number of Minute	Para Number of Schedule 7A
17	Paras 8 and 9 Information on proposed terms and/or expenditure to be incurred by the Authority.
18	Paras 8 and 9 Information on proposed terms and/or expenditure to be incurred by the Authority.

5. Minutes of meeting of 28 November 2023

The minute of the meeting of the Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee dated 28 November 2023 was submitted and approved.

6. Written Questions **

The Committee noted the following written question submitted by Councillor Fernandes and the Council's response thereto:

School Library Improvement Fund

The list of schools that have been awarded a share of the £200,000 from the School Library Improvement Fund, administered by The Scottish Library and Information Council, was recently published.

No Moray schools received any funding this year, which was also the case in 2023. Did any Moray schools apply for the latest round of SLIF funding?

Across Moray, how many SLIF applications have been made since the funding's launch in 2017?

How many of these applications have been successful?

What support do school librarians receive to help them succeed in applying for the fund?

RESPONSE

Did any Moray schools apply for the latest round of SLIF?

No Moray schools applied for funding in the latest round of SLIF. Therefore, none received.

Across Moray, how many SLIF applications have been made since the funding's launch in 2017?

- 2021/22: Forres Academy: Equality, Inclusion, Diversity and A Mentally Healthy School.
- 2019/20: Elgin Academy: Raising Awareness of Everyday Sexism Project. The group of S6 pupils who led this project subsequently received Moray Young Citizen of the Year Awards.
- 2019/20: Dyke Primary School: Develop a culture of reading for enjoyment across the whole school community and to raise attainment in reading.
- 2018/19: West End Primary School: Library Transformation project.
- 2018/19: Moray School Librarians from Buckie High School, Elgin Academy, Elgin High School, Forres Academy, Keith Grammar School, Lossiemouth

How many of these applications have been successful?

- Forres Academy
- Elgin Academy
- Moray Schools Librarians Group.

What support do school librarians receive to help them succeed in applying for the fund?

Shelagh Toonen, librarian at Elgin Academy (ST) is the Lead Contact for SLIF in Moray and when the funding is announced, she emails all primary headteachers; school librarians and QIO for Literacy at Moray Council to make them aware of funding and any requirements from SLIC. Applicants are asked to submit applications to ST a week before the SLIC deadline. ST and the applicant discuss the application and when the applicant is happy and confident about submitting their application, ST shares the application with SLIC. ST can talk to SLIC staff at any time about the application process and feedback is shared with applicants throughout the application process.

Within school, school librarians receive support from their line managers and SLT. Indeed, permission and approval for any projects should be granted by SLT before submission of any application for funding.

The project within schools is managed by a team, which includes the school librarian (usually project manager) and teachers, support staff and a member of SLT. The project team meets regularly during both the planning and the implementation of the projects. The project team is required to submit an evaluation of the project after its completion.

7. Children and Families Social Work Services Revenue Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Chief Officer, Health and Social Care Moray informing the Committee of the budget position for Children and Families Social Work Services as at 31 December 2023.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to note the budget position as at 31 December 2023.

8. Education Revenue Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informing the Committee of the budget position for Education as at 31 December 2023.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to note the budget position as at 31 December 2023.

9. Devolved School Budgets Carry Forward

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) seeking Committee approval to allow a school to carry forward budget spend which was planned for this financial year and which has not progressed due to reasons outwith the school's control.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to allow the following school to retain the following amounts for planned spend which has not progressed:-

- (i) Milne's High School for flooring circa £20k and altering a room to create an additional PE changing room circa £50k.

10. Education Scotland Inspection of Knockando Primary School

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informing the Committee of the outcomes of the recently published report on a Moray school following inspection by Education Scotland.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to note the contents of the report and findings of Education Scotland following their inspection visit.

11. Initial Analysis of Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) providing the Committee with a summary of the Moray data collected in June 2023 and provided to the Scottish Government at the end of October 2023 regarding Teacher Professional Judgements (TPJ) on children achieving Curriculum for Excellence levels (ACEL) at P1, P4, P7 and S3. This data appears in the Scottish Government Report published in December 2023.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to:-

- (i) note the content of the report;
- (ii) acknowledge work underway by Education and across Moray schools using resources available in order to address identified areas of underperformance and improve outcomes for all children and young people;
- (iii) note ACEL results for P1, P4 P7 and S3, improvement over time and progress in relation to Stretch Aims set using available data intelligences, as part of the Scottish Government and Education Scotland Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress requirements; and
- (iv) note actions underway and planned in support of improving outcomes for all learners and their ACEL achievement.

12. Behaviour in Moray Schools

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) in response to the request of Committee in November 2023, advising Committee of escalating behaviours in schools and actions to support staff, pupils and the wider school community as well as ongoing work with partners.

Councillor Mustard welcomed the report however considered a stronger recommendation to the Community Planning Board was appropriate and proposed amending recommendation (iii) to read:-

- (iii) that this work will be led in a multi-agency approach with a short, medium to long term action plan and refers the matter to the Community Planning Partnership Board as a matter of urgency seeking assurance of commitment to bring back a report with actions identified to the Community Planning Board in May, to include barriers and what can be done to support and alleviate the issues.

This was seconded by Councillor Warren.

Councillor Ross in responding to the paper advised that he was in favour of smaller class sizes and he believed reducing class sizes in secondary schools would alleviate a number of the behavioural issues.

Thereafter Councillor Ross, seconded by Councillor Macrae, moved to add an additional recommendation asking the Council Leader to write to the Cabinet Secretary endorsing the approaches in the Behaviour in Schools 2023 report and calling for the Scottish Government to reduce class sizes to 20.

Adjournment of the Meeting

The Chair proposed a short adjournment to allow Members the opportunity to consider the wording of the motion.

Resumption of the Meeting

Following a short adjournment and prior to moving to the vote, clarification was sought as to whether this was a competent motion. The Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance advised that there did not appear to be sufficient information within the report to support this position on class sizes as there be factors to consider, such as the impact on the school estate and financial implications. The question, in terms of Standing Order 49(c), was whether Members had sufficient information for them to come to a reasoned and balanced decision. The Chair sought the views of Members on this issue and the majority felt there was not enough information to make a decision to write a letter in those terms based on the information contained in the report.

Further discussion took place during which it became clear members of the Committee were not against the principle of writing a letter to the Cabinet Secretary in more general terms asking that class sizes be considered.

As an amendment, Councillor Lawrence, seconded by Councillor McBain, moved to add an additional recommendation asking the Council Leader to write to the Cabinet Secretary endorsing the approaches in the Behaviour in Schools 2023 report and asking that the Scottish Government consider the effect of class sizes on anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Divers left the meeting during discussion of this item.

Prior to the vote, the Chair clarified that both the motion and amendment included the strengthened recommendation (iii) moved by Councillor Mustard and seconded by Councillor Warren.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (3)	Councillors Ross, Macrae and Keith

For the Amendment (9)	Councillors Lawrence, McBain, Allan, Colyer, Harris, Leadbitter, Mustard, Robertson and Warren
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Accordingly the amendment became the finding of the meeting and the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to acknowledge National work ongoing around increased disruptive behaviour across schools and society;
- (ii) to acknowledge and endorse the local approach as set out in Appendix 1;
- (iii) that this work will be led in a multi-agency approach with a short, medium to long term action plan and refers the matter to the Community Planning Partnership Board as a matter of urgency seeking assurance of commitment to bring back a report with actions identified to the Community Planning Board in May, to include barriers and what can be done to support and alleviate the issues; and
- (iv) the Council Leader be asked to write to the Cabinet Secretary to endorse the approaches recommended in the Behaviour in Schools 2023 report and asking that the Scottish Government consider the effect of class sizes on anti-social behaviour.

In terms of Standing Order 67, Councillors Ross, Keith and Macrae requested that their dissent at the decision be recorded.

13. Review of Additional Support Needs Services

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) advising Committee of the progress to date with the Additional Support Needs (ASN) review and action plan moving forwards.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to:-

- (i) acknowledge work to date in progressing the review;
- (ii) acknowledge and endorse new priority areas and identified actions;
- (iii) the Supporting All learning strategy being reviewed to include ASN and to be brought back to a future meeting of this Committee; and
- (iv) a comprehensive Change Management Plan (CMP) being reported back to a future Committee with a clear timeline for move from current Enhanced Provision Units to Enhanced and Flexible Provision.

14. Education Resources and Communities Revenue Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2023

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informing the Committee of the budget position for Education Resources and Communities as at 31 December 2023.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to note the budget position at 31 December 2023.

15. Information Reports - if called in

The Committee noted that no Information Reports had been called in.

16. Question Time ***

Buckie Associated School Group Engagement

Councillor Warren suggested reminders of the engagement survey be issued to ensure the public are participating including the drop in sessions on 26 and 27 February and asked what procedures, checks and balances are in place to ensure the surveys used in the consultations provide neutrality and given open and balanced answers and opinions and also if the questions in the survey have been checked against an independent verifier for objectivity and neutrality standards.

In response the Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities advised there is no independent verifier and while the survey contains direct questions, they have tried to allow open questions to provide narrative so the appropriate messages can be picked out. The survey follows a similar style and approach adopted by other local authorities and has been reviewed and approved by the Council's Equal Opportunities Officer and Research and Information Officer.

Moray College

Councillor Ross asked if officers can monitor the situation at Moray College regarding the impact of proposed job and course cuts and come back with an update if found to be having a significant impact on school leavers.

In response the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) advised the only information officers have is what is in the public domain however advised further information could be sought from the College.

Primary and Secondary School Capacity Occupancy and General Purpose Spaces 2023-24

Councillor Harris asked for information on out of zone placement percentages for primary and secondary schools in Moray which could be placed alongside the information report containing the table on school working and functional spaces and provided data on past and current actual numbers in school.

In response the Acting Head of Education Resources and Communities advised such information was in the public domain and confirmed he would arrange for it to be added.

17. Learning Estate and Delivery Programme - Findrassie Primary School [Paras 8 and 9]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) providing Committee with an update on the Findrassie Primary School new build project and seeking a decision from Committee to continue with a deferment of the project based on updated school roll forecast.

Concern was raised by a number of Councillors about whether recommendation (iii) should be removed given that the current forecast was until 2030, other pressures on officer time and also the need to take account of other undetermined factors.

In terms of Standing Order 85, the Chair sought agreement from the Committee to suspend Standing Order 77 and continue beyond 12.45pm in order to conclude consideration of this item.

This was unanimously agreed.

Councillor Macrae left the meeting during discussion of this item.

Following discussion with officers, the Chair moved to remove recommendation (iii) which meant recommendation (iv) would become recommendation (iii).

Following consideration and there being no one otherwise minded the Committee unanimously agreed to:-

- (i) note the update to projected pupils numbers in Elgin Academy Associated School Group (ASG) impacting the future requirement for Findrassie Primary School new build;
- (ii) approve the continued deferment to the Findrassie Primary School new build project for a further 5 years; and
- (iii) note that a further update report on the Findrassie project will be brought to this Committee in early 2025.

18. Learning Estate Programme - Elgin High School Capacity Expansion Project Update [Paras 8 and 9]

The meeting had before it a report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informing the Committee of the current status of the Elgin High School capacity extension and seeking approval to progress to Full Business Case.

Following consideration the Committee unanimously agreed to approve the procurement strategy set out in paragraphs 5.4 to 5.6 of the report and associated costs to take the project to Full Business Case (FBC).