

MORAY COUNCIL

Minute of Meeting of the Children and Young People's Committee

Wednesday, 28 August 2019

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

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor James Allan, Ms Nicola Belcher, Councillor Lorna Creswell, Councillor Tim Eagle, Councillor Claire Feaver, Councillor Louise Laing, Councillor Aaron McLean, Mr John Morrison, Councillor Shona Morrison, Reverend Tembu Rongong, Councillor Derek Ross, Caitlin Thomson-Gardner, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Paula Coy, Mrs Anne Currie, Councillor Ryan Edwards, Mrs Susan Slater, Ms Angela Stuart

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were Head of Schools and Curriculum Development, the Joint Acting Heads of Integrated Children's Services, Educational Resources Manager, Transformation Officer, Head of Instrumental Instruction, Legal Services Manager and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Sonya Warren.

2. Welcome and Goodbyes

The Committee joined the Chair in welcoming Mr John Morrison, Church of Scotland representative and Caitlin Gardner-Thomson the new pupil representative from Elgin High School to their first meeting. They also welcomed Joyce Johnston and Jackie Stevenson, the joint Acting Heads of Integrated Children's Services.

The Committee also joined the Chair in thanking Mr Nick Goodchild, Education Resources Manager for his services at his last meeting of the Committee before he retires.

3. Forres Credit Union

At the request of the Chair, Councillor Creswell introduced a video which highlighted the benefits of the Children's Savings Club run by Forres Credit Union prior to the Committee viewing a video about the service.

4. St Peter's Primary School

Councillor Warren informed the Committee that St Peter's Primary School in Buckie has become the only school in Moray to be awarded a Teracycle Recycling point for old pens, highlighters, and correction pens/bottles.

Councillor Warren encouraged all Members to support the initiative and if anyone wanted any further information to contact the School or Councillor Warren.

5. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillor Eagle declared an interest in Item 11 in respect of Portessie Primary only and confirmed he would leave the meeting at the start of the discussion on Portessie Primary.

6. Minute of Meeting on 29 May 2019

The minute of the meeting of the Children and Young People's Committee dated 29 May 2019 was submitted and approved subject to a change to reflect the break for lunch during the meeting.

7. Written Questions **

The Committee noted that a question had been submitted by Mrs Nicola Belcher, Parent Representative.

To ask the Committee to consider changes to the Active Schools booking system.

On the last two occasions, the Active Schools booking system has opened on close of business or later on a Friday. If there are any issues with booking, particularly for parents and carers in the Buckie ASG, Council staff have been unavailable until Monday to resolve these. Parents/Carers then have to submit their enquiry to the team in the form of an email and by the time the issue is resolved, there are no spaces left.

On the most recent occasion, the council's social media and booking instructions email stated that it would be live from 6pm to book, however, it went live at least 15/20 minutes early. This meant that people who logged on at 6pm found that some classes were full or only had 1 or 2 spaces.

Would it be possible to allow people to phone Council staff to sort out booking issues or open the booking through the week so that parents/carers can get a response

more quickly? It would also be helpful if there was the ability to link family accounts to save signing in/out again for each child.

Lastly, when there are waiting lists of 10+ children for specific activities, is it possible to expand the number of times the popular activities are on offer?

The programme is excellent and my own children attend/have attended many of the courses available and enjoy them thoroughly. I really value the opportunity the team are able to offer our children so it would be better if it was fair for everyone. When so much work has been put into FitLife sign-ups it would be a shame for there to be continuous issues with the booking process as this may put some families off.

RESPONSE

The service thanks Mrs Belcher for her question and is grateful for her positive comments about the quality of the courses provided and the suggestions made.

This term the process for opening the booking system began at 6pm on Friday 16 August and finished approximately 20 minutes later. The number of places taken on courses is currently 746 out of a total of 1082. There are 71 people on the waiting list for the most popular courses.

A range of actions were taken following the first launch in January when booking queries totalled 400. The main issues for customers were unfamiliarity with the online process, forgotten passwords, parents booking themselves on rather than their children and the system not recognising MLC members. To address these issues an email was sent to all customers in advance of the bookings going live to advise them of the information they would require and to provide a step by step explanation of the process. The step by step guide was also on the front page of the system. As a result of these actions and due to customers being more familiar with the process queries for this term have reduced to 60.

The service recognises that further improvements can be made and we will review the process next month to identify and consider any changes. One of the changes introduced for this term was the Friday opening as we had received complaints that for people in work mid-week openings meant that courses were sometimes fully booked by the time they got home. An alternative might be to open bookings midweek at 6pm which could address both their needs and the issues raised by Mrs Belcher.

Unfortunately staff resources dictate that we are unable to deal with telephone enquiries. In addition dealing with email enquiries enables the team to ensure that all enquiries are dealt with in strict chronological order.

Unfortunately the software we use requires separate bookings for individual children. In terms of putting on additional courses where waiting lists exceed 10 people we always consider doing this. Organising these however depends upon the availability of coaches and facilities.

Mrs Belcher acknowledged the response but said it did not answer her question regarding the early opening of the booking system before 6pm. She further asked whether the age limit on less popular classes could be lowered to help fill them.

In response the Education Resources Manager confirmed that he had spoken to his team and they had confirmed that the booking system process started at 6pm however, if Mrs Belcher's experience was different he would check again.

He further added that Mrs Belcher had raised some good suggestions for improving the Active Schools service and was happy to discuss these further following the meeting and pass them onto the Active Schools Team.

8. Education Governance - Education Reform and School Empowerment

A report by the Chief Executive updated Committee on progress in relation to education governance and the school empowerment agenda.

During the discussion, Councillor Eagle requested a report to review the 6 subject choices in the senior phase as part of the 33 period week review as Councillor Eagle was aware that other Local Authorities offer 8 subjects in the senior phase at secondary school.

In response the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development advised that this would be included as part of the 33 period a week review but added that there are pupils within Moray who are studying up to 8 subjects in the senior phase as part of the 'getting it right for every child' agenda.

Following lengthy discussion Committee agreed to note the report and that a report reviewing the 33 period week will be presented to a future Committee which will include a review of the 6 subject choices for senior phase secondary pupils.

9. Education and Social Care Capital Budgets 2019-20 to 30 June 2019.xlsx

A report by the Chief Executive informed the Committee of projects and proposed expenditure for Capital Budgets within Education and Social Care.

Following discussion the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

10. Education and Children and Families Revenue Budget Monitoring Report June 2019

A report by the Chief Executive informed Committee of the budget position for Education and Children and Families Services as at 30 June 2019.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the budget position at 30 June 2019.

11. Performance Report - Education and Social Care - Half Year to March 2019

A report by the Chief Executive outlined the performance of services for the period from 1 October 2018 to 31 March 2019.

During consideration, Councillor Eagle sought clarification on the care experienced children who have had more than 1 placement. In response, Joyce Johnston, the Joint Acting Head of Integrated Children's Services confirmed that this is an area that the Council will be focussing on as it does suggest that the current system is not working as it should be. She further added that a report will be brought back to Committee to identify where the thinking and understanding is with regards to Re-aligning Children's Services work and the Independent Care Review and how it all fits in at a strategic level to link in with the timings of the Children's Services Plan which is due for publication in 2020.

Councillor Morrison requested an update report on the Criminal Justice Service for the next Committee in October. In response, Joyce Johnston, the Joint Acting Head of Integrated Children's Services agreed to provide an update report on the criminal justice and community justice services.

Councillor Eagle sought an update on Additional Support Needs and SEBN review and asked if there would be a report coming to Committee soon. In response Jackie Stevenson, Joint Acting Head of Integrated Children's Services confirmed that a report can be written following the final sense checking after the 23 September 2019.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to: -

- (i) note performance against Education and Social Care Performance Indicators as at the end of March 2019;
- (ii) welcome good performance as indicated in the report and note actions being taken to seek improvements where required; and
- (iii) approve the revised performance indicators for Education and Social Care as shown in Appendix 1.

12. Education Scotland Inspection of Glenlivet Primary School

A report by the Chief Executive invited the Committee to scrutinise and note the outcomes of the recently published report on Glenlivet Primary School following an inspection by Education Scotland.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the content of the report.

13. Education Scotland inspection of Cluny Primary School Buckie

A report by the Chief Executive invited the Committee to scrutinise and note the outcomes of the recently published report on a Cluny Primary School following an inspection by Education Scotland.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

14. Education Scotland Progress Reports following Inspection - Newmill, Crossroads and Portessie Primary Schools

A report by the Chief Executive invited the Committee to scrutinise and note the progress reports from three schools following Education Scotland Inspections in October 2017 for Newmill Primary School, in November 2017 for Crossroads Primary School and in March 2018 for Portessie Primary School.

Councillor Eagle sought assurance that the reports have been sent to all Parent Councils and parents in the schools. In response the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development confirmed that the 3 head teachers had taken the decision not to send the reports out before the school holidays, as they were concerned that if parents had any queries there would be no one available to answer any questions. She further added that all Parent Councils will have received a copy by the end of the week and parents would receive copies following that.

Councillor Eagle expressed concern that the Parent Councils and parents had not yet had the opportunity to see the reports and requested that the report be deferred until this had happened. In response the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development further added that a review of the procedures will take place and will include tightening up on timescales.

Councillor Eagle welcomed the review however, he was concerned that the Parent Councils and parents had not had the chance to view the reports and took the view that the reports should be brought back to the Committee in October to allow parental engagement to take place and as part of any progress report there is a section for parental feedback where the Chair of the Parent Council states that they have discussed the report and provided any comments.

In response, the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development expressed caution about discussing individual schools however, she was aware that there had been some engagement with parents.

Following that response, Councillor Eagle moved to defer the item until the next meeting of the Committee to allow Parent Councils and parents the opportunity to comment and engage regarding the Inspection reports. This was seconded by Councillor Feaver

The Chair asked for a short recess to seek legal advice regarding Councillor Eagle's motion. This was agreed.

On resumption of the meeting, Councillor Eagle summarised his motion. In response the Legal Services Manager confirmed that there is not a set process in place, however it was not unreasonable or inappropriate for the Committee to scrutinise and note the contents of the report for their interest as the role of the school and parents was different.

Councillor Morrison, seconded by Councillor proposed an amendment to approve the recommendations as stated in the report.

On the division there voted:

For the Motion (4) Councillors Eagle, Feaver, Creswell and Ross

For the Amendment (8) the Councillors Morrison, Laing, Alexander, Allan, McLean, Warren, Mr Morrison and Reverend Rongong

Abstentions (0) Nil

Accordingly the amendment became the finding of the meeting and the Committee agreed to note the content of the report

15. Singleton Inspections of Early Learning and Childcare Centres - Published reports from February to May 2019

A report by the Chief Executive informed Committee of the content of singleton inspection reports of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) centres by the Care Inspectorate which were published during January to March 2019.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

16. Music Instruction

A report by the Chief Executive updated Committee on the Music Instruction Service.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the report.

17. Question Time ***

Under reference to paragraph 17 of the minute of the meeting of 29 May 2019, Councillor Laing sought an update on automated benefit payments for parents/carers applying for school clothing grants and free school meals.

In response, the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development agreed to provide an update for Councillor Laing following the meeting.

Under reference to paragraph 8 and 10 of the minute of the meeting of 29 May 2019, Councillor Feaver requested whether it would be possible to expand the minute of meetings to include the discussion points from the meetings for ease of reference in the future.

In response, the Clerk advised that she was aware that the same issue had been raised at Communities Committee on 27 August 2019 and that the issue would be discussed with the Democratic Services Manager in consultation with CMT and Committee Chairs to take forward.

Under defence to paragraph 17 of the minute of the meeting 29 May 2019, Councillor Ross sought an update on the replacement of Mr Jarvis, the Acting Corporate Director (Education and Social Care). Councillor Ross was aware that the future management structure was currently out for consultation but requested an update on the interim arrangements.

In response the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development indicated that she had been given additional responsibilities for 2 months during the consultation period.

Councillor Ross sought clarification on whether there were procedures for Head Teachers to share good practice with each other.

In response the Head of Schools and Curriculum Development advised that the sharing of good practice already happens within the department and every opportunity to do so is taken.