

MORAY COUNCIL

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

Wednesday, 09 March 2022

Remote Locations via Video Conference

PRESENT

Councillor George Alexander, Councillor James Allan, Councillor Frank Brown, Councillor Lorna Creswell, Mrs Anne Currie, Councillor Claire Feaver, Councillor Graham Leadbitter, Councillor Aaron McLean, Councillor Shona Morrison, Councillor Derek Ross, Mrs Susan Slater, Ms Angela Stuart, Councillor Amy Taylor, Councillor Sonya Warren

APOLOGIES

Councillor Tim Eagle, Councillor Ryan Edwards, Councillor Laura Powell, Reverend Tembu Rongong

IN ATTENDANCE

Also in attendance at the above meeting were the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development), Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance, Head of Education, Head of Education Resources and Communities, Head of Housing and Property, Design Manager, Head of Internal Audit, Continuous Improvement Officer (Early Years) and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer.

1. Chair

The meeting was chaired by Councillor Sonya Warren.

2. Declaration of Group Decisions and Members Interests *

In terms of Standing Order 20 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. Resolution

The meeting resolved that in terms of Section 50A (4) and (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 19973, as amended, the public and media representatives be excluded from the meeting for Item 13 of business on the grounds that it involves 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 the Minute	Para Number of Schedule 7a
14	Para 1 and 11 Information relating to Staffing Matters

	and Information relating to any consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations
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4. Petition

The Chair advised the Committee that she had received a petition from Pupils at Buckie High School, which is supported by senior pupils from the other secondary schools in the area. The petition had been circulated to all Members of the Committee prior to the meeting.

The petition was in regards to the timing of the payment of the free school payments to senior pupils.

The Chair confirmed that the pupils had highlighted an important issue and Officers are currently determining whether a solution can be determined with a report coming to a future meeting of this Committee.

The Chair advised that the petition doesn't currently fall with in the Council's petition process but felt it was important to listen to the young people. The Chair confirmed that she had discussed the petition process with the Chair of Corporate Committee and which he would raise later in the meeting.

5. Minutes of meeting - 26 January and 2 February 2022

The minute of the meetings of Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on 26 January and 2 February 2022 were submitted and approved.

6. Written Questions

The Committee noted that no written questions had been submitted.

7. Education Resources and Communities and Education Capital Budget Monitoring Report

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informed the Committee of projects and proposed expenditure for Capital Budgets within Education, Children's and Leisure Services for 2021/22 and sought approval for the proposed programme of Schools BB projects for financial year 2022/23.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the report; and
- ii) approve the proposed programme of projects for financial year 2022/23 under the Schools BB budget heading detailed in Appendix II.

8. Elgin Community Centre

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) provided the Committee with an update in relation to Elgin Community Centre (Elgin CC) and asked the Committee to agree to defer a decision on the future of this facility until the end of 2022.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to:

- i) note the information in relation to the current operation of Elgin CC; and
- ii) extend the period for review work on the future of Elgin Community Centre until the end of 2022.

9. Education Resources and Communities Revenue Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2021

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informed the Committee of the budget position for Education Resources and Communities as at 31 December 2021.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the budget position at 31 December 2021.

10. Education and Education Resources and Communities Service Plans 2022-23

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) invited the Committee to consider the Education and Education Resources and Communities Services' Service Plans for 2022-23.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to approve the Service Plans for services within Education (Schools and Early Years) and Education Resources and Communities.

11. Education Revenue Budget Monitoring to 31 December 2021

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informed the Committee of the budget position for Education as at 31 December 2021.

Following consideration the Committee agreed to note the budget position as at 31 December 2021.

12. Allocation of Education Funding

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) updated the Committee on allocation of the funding for Education in the 2022/23 revenue grant settlement, to raise known budget pressures, the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and to ask the Committee to consider the allocation of the funding taking account of these issues.

Following consideration, Councillor Warren moved to accept the recommendations as printed and in relation to recommendations (iv) agree option (d) request 21 additional NQTs across Primary and Secondary. This was seconded by Councillor Brown.

Councillor Alexander sought clarification on what would happen if the Council were unsuccessful in obtaining a further 21 NQTs. The Head of Education confirmed that if the Council did not receive all 21 NQTs requested a report would come back to Committee for decision on how to spend the remaining money.

As there was no one otherwise minded, the Committee agreed to:

- i) meet the budget pressure relating to school roll increases for primary schools which has been re-assessed as £533k;
- ii) meet the now known budget pressure in relation to Additional Support Needs of £1.1m;
- iii) fund the post of Principal Teacher Flexible Education which is a new budget pressure, at a cost of £63k;
- iv) allocate £220k for the 9 support staff posts allowed for in the additional grant funding; and
- v) request 21 additional NQTs across Primary and Secondary.

13. Question Time ***

Councillor Ross sought an update on the Ventilation and CO² Monitoring in Schools and Nurseries report which he had requested at the previous meeting of the Committee.

In response, the Head of Education Resources and Communities confirmed that the report had been included as an Information Report on this meeting's Additional Meeting Documents section.

The Programme Manager (Learning Estate) joined the meeting at this juncture and gave a brief verbal update on the Ventilation Programme.

Councillor A McLean, as Chair of Corporate Committee acknowledged, the previously raised issue around petitions from our pupils and that there is currently no process for dealing with these. He confirmed that the Head of Governance, Strategy and Performance is currently reviewing the Petitions Policy and sought confirmation that this will include petitions from young people.

In response, the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) confirmed that this is a piece of work being carried out and that other avenues would also be explored to make sure there are a range of appropriate places that children and young people can be heard.

Councillor Feaver sought clarification from the Chair on why performance reports were included as Additional Meeting Documents rather than being included on the main agenda for the meeting to allow scrutiny.

In response, the Chair confirmed that where reports (with the exception of performance and budget reports) are for considering and noting they are additional meeting documents. She further added that there is a process for members to call in these reports to the next meeting, as had been done by Councillor Feaver at the previous meeting of this Committee, should they have any concerns about the reports. The reason for this process is to better manage the Committee time.

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) further confirmed the rationale described by the Chair, which had been agreed by the Council and is followed through by this and other service Committees.

This was as part of the Governance Review. Reports come forward as Information Reports in order to make the most effective use of Committee time .

The reports are available to members of the public and members and can be called in, if there is an issue which requires debate and a decision.

The Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) for clarity confirmed that the reports Councillor Feaver was referring to are inspection reports that have been carried out by Education Scotland and not routine Performance Reports which are brought to Council and Committees as part of the Council's performance management framework.

14. Moray Early Learning and Childcare Service Delivery [Para 1 and 11]

A report by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) informed the Committee of the suggested approaches to contain costs within Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) whilst continuing to support growing demand.

During consideration the Chair sought agreement in terms of Standing Order 80, to suspend Standing Order 75 in order to conclude the meeting past 12.45pm. This was unanimously agreed.

Following lengthy consideration Councillor Alexander moved the recommendations as printed and with regards to recommendation (v) agreed to pursue the appointment of an external consultant to undertake a complete review of the service and structure and to seek the budget from Council. This was seconded by Councillor Warren.

Councillor Feaver sought the inclusion of the scope of work to be carried out by the consultant be included in the report to Council. In response, the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities and Organisational Development) confirmed that the scope would be included in the report.

As there was no one otherwise minded the Committee agreed to:

- i) the proposed initial measures to contain escalating ELC costs notably option 2 on Appendix 1 and option 2 on Appendix 2;
- ii) note the outcome of the Internal Audit investigation;
- iii) notes that work undertaken to date to identify savings has amounted to £175k and that this is insufficient to bring the service within budget;
- iv) a trial period for a limited number of local authority ELC services to offer top up hours to generate income; and
- v) pursue the appointment of an external consultant to undertake a complete review of the service and structure and to report to the Council to seek budget for this.