REPORT TO: MORAY COUNCIL ON 16 DECEMBER 2020

SUBJECT: REVIEW OF ADDITONAL SUPPORT NEEDS- STAFFING

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1.   REASON FOR REPORT

1.1   To ask the Council to approve the recommendations from the Education, Communities and Organisational Development committee in relation to the staffing and budget requirements for the Review of the Additional Support Needs service.

1.2   This report is submitted to the Council in terms of Section (A) 2 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to consideration of Capital and Revenue budgets and long term financial planning.

2.   RECOMMENDATION

2.1   It is recommended that the Council approves the recommendation from the ECOD Committee to establish posts and budget noted below:

i)   Inclusion Manager post to stabilise the services and to progress the transformation agenda (at a cost of £83,258 per annum);

ii)   Re-instate the second post of Education Support Officer (ASN) to provide capacity to support schools during the Covid-19 pandemic and to help provide a secure platform from which change can be driven forward (at a cost of £68,244 per annum).

2.2   It is also recommended that the Council determines whether these posts are established for an initial temporary period of 2 years to enable the transformation to progress before determining the longer term structure or on a permanent basis, taking account of the risks and benefits of each set out in the report.

3.   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Education, Communities and Organisational Development (ECOD) Committee on 18 November 2020 considered a report providing an update on the review and transformation of the Additional Support Needs (ASN) service, which is part of the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme. The report noted that the programme of work had been impacted upon by the Covid-19 pandemic and that this had impacted on the progress of the ASN project as well as by a number of changes within the service, including the management structure.

3.2   The services that fall within the ASN service are: ASN Support; SEBN provision, Autism Service, English an Additional Language, Sensory Education Service, and Educational Psychology Service.

3.3   A particular challenge for ASN services currently is a lack of a capacity and this has been further exacerbated by the current pandemic. During previous budget considerations, posts were removed from the ASN service structures to contribute to budget savings. This included the ASN Manager post, one ASN Education Support Officer (ESO) and more recently the Integrated Children's Services Wellbeing Manager post. The management responsibilities of the ASN Manager were shared informally, temporary budget underspends were used to continue to fund the ESO post and the duties of the Wellbeing manager are being shared out between Children's Service and Education Resources and Communities, including ASN as team structures are reviewed. However, it has emerged that revised structures to fully incorporate and accommodate the earlier changes relating to ASN were not finalised. While there may be an argument for lean management structures, it is difficult to progress major change with limited strategic level capacity, while at the same time operating services that carry major risks for the council.

3.4   The ESOs (ASN) provide outreach support to our 53 schools. It has not been possible to reduce the team size down from two to one within the current context and operating model without introducing significant risk and it is not possible to continue to fund the post using underspends from Education budgets long term as it removes resource from another priority area. Therefore, the Council is asked to approve the recommendation from the ECOD committee to re-instate the post of ESO (ASN) giving two ESO posts in this team.

3.5   Management capacity also requires to be addressed to provide management of the service and, significantly, to undertake a major transformation of ASN services to ensure they are fit for the future. The service needs to be reviewed to ensure that it supports a positive learning environment for all learners and the demands upon the service will require strong and innovative leadership to develop and implement a new model for ASN across Moray. In addition to the requirement to review the provision of ASN services there are a number of other pressing operational issues that require to be managed to ensure a secure platform is place to move forward from.

3.5 A phased approach to stabilising the service and developing the case for change into a sound business case that can be relied upon for the implementation of agreed changes by mid-2021 was set out in the report to ECOD Committee. This will be a significant piece of work and will require clear management and leadership. As noted above, management capacity is not available due to previous changes and needs to be addressed. Therefore, it is recommended that the Council approves the recommendation from the ECOD Committee to establish a post of Inclusion Manager.

3.6 The report to the ECOD Committee on 18 November proposed to establish these two posts for an initial temporary period of two years. This was to take account of the focus on transformation, which could result in change to the long term management and specialist staff structure. It was also of note that posts dedicated to transformation can be funded from the ear-marked reserves for Council priorities and transformation for the 2 year transformation period. The financial implications section of the report advised that if it was not possible to accommodate the costs of the new management structure within the service budget under the new operating model, any future years' budget provision would fall to be considered as a budget pressure as part of the financial planning process.

3.7 At the ECOD Committee, questions were raised as to whether it would be preferable to create permanent posts as this would give stability for the service and might aid recruitment. If the Council was minded to make these posts permanent, the first 2 years that are directed towards transformation could be funded from the ear-marked reserves and thereafter core revenue budget would be required. It is considered that there will be an ongoing requirement for two posts at this level. However, there would be a possibility that the nature of the roles change significantly under a new operating model and in that scenario consideration would have to be given to how reasonable it would be for the postholders to take on the new roles or whether there would be a redundancy situation.

4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

   (a) **Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))**

   This report relates to the priority 'Provide opportunities where young people can achieve their potential to be the best they can be' from the Corporate Plan and to 'Building a better future for our children and young people in Moray' from the LOIP.

   (b) **Policy and Legal:**
   None

   (c) **Financial implications**

   To stabilise the service and deliver the ASN Review there is a requirement for an Inclusion Service Manager post estimated Grade 13

£83,258 (per annum) and the reinstatement of the second ESO (ASN) post (£68,244per annum) at a total cost of £151,502 per annum. It is proposed that this additional budget is met from the ear-marked reserves for Council priorities and transformation for the 2 year transformation period.

The service review aims to stabilise the service and ensure appropriate processes are in place to manage escalating demand, costs and risks to reduce potential future budget pressures. This will include a review of the operating model and management structure for the service and the aim will be to achieve this and service demands within the current service budget. However, if this is not possible any future years' budget provision would fall to be considered as a budget pressure as part of the financial planning process.

(d) **Risk Implications:**

There is a risk that if it is not possible to stabilise the service, it will not be possible to provide effective support to meet the needs of children and young people with additional support needs and their families, as required under Additional Support for Learning Legislation.

There is a risk that if a secure platform cannot be established from which change can be driven it will not be possible to transform our services to better meet the changing needs of children and young people, resulting in continuing increases in the number of children and young people with additional support needs (including an increase in the complexity of needs) at a time of reduced resources to support those needs. This will have implications for the escalation of the cost of the service, which could be significant both collectively and in individual cases.

The review aims to provide a learning environment that supports attainment for all and there is a risk to this if resources are not available to manage the service and the review.

If the posts referred to are established on a temporary basis they could be less attractive in recruitment terms and could lead to increased turnover towards the end of the temporary period.

If the posts are established on a permanent basis, there is a risk that the long term structure requires different roles and skills which would have to be considered as a transform opportunity and there could be a possibility of redundancy if the change was significant.

(e) Staffing Implications:

It is proposed to create a new post at Service Manager level with strategic oversight across all ASN services. It is proposed to reinstate an ESO (ASN) post to provide additional operational capacity to help support schools during the Covid-19 recovery and during any period of

change that will be set out in the ASN Review business case and any accompanying change management plans.

The question of whether the posts should be temporary or permanent was raised at the ECOD Committee and the issues associated with these options are covered in this report.

(f)   Property:
none

(g)   Equalities/Socio Economic Impact:
None from this report. However, the actions as set out in the report to the ECOD Committee will help to ensure the ASN services can effectively meet the needs of all children and young people in Moray with additional support needs both now and into the future.

(h)   Consultations:
The Head of Financial Services and Head of Education Resources and Communities have been consulted and their advice incorporated into this report. There were wider consultations on the report to ECOD Committee.

5.   CONCLUSION

5.1   The work on the Improvement and Modernisation Programme is now being re-activated and requires to move at pace, taking account of the impacts of Covid-19 on relevant projects. To ensure progress on the ASN Review it is essential that management capacity is available to stabilise the service and actively progress the transformation agenda. Adequate specialist expertise is also required for the central team to provide the necessary support to schools on the ASN service. Therefore, this report seeks approval to establish the post of Inclusion Manager and ESO (ASN) on either a temporary 2 year or on a permanent basis as determined by the Council and allocate budget accordingly.