

## Minute of Meeting Petitions Board

| Date                      | Time  | Venue   |
|---------------------------|-------|---|
| Wednesday, 30 August 2017 | 14:30 | Corporate Meeting Room 3, Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN |

**Present:** Councillor Jennifer Marion Adam-McGregor, Councillor Bill Brown, Councillor Stephen Burns, Councillor Michelle Campbell, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Scott Kerr, Councillor Jim Sharkey, Councillor Andy Steel

### Chair

Councillor Adam-McGregor, Convener, presided.

### In Attendance

J Trainer, Head of Early Years and Inclusion (Children's Services); and P Shiach Committee Services Officer (Finance & Resources).

### Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest intimated prior to commencement of the meeting.

## **1 Annual Report of Petitions received and their Outcomes**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to petitions considered by the former Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board during the period September 2016 to March 2017, and by the Petitions Board in June 2017.

The report advised that following the Local Government Elections in May 2017 and subsequent changes to the Council's decision-making structure approved at the Statutory Meeting of the Council held on 18 May 2017, the petitions function was separated from the audit and scrutiny function, and the Petitions Board was established.

The report indicated that seven petitions were considered by the former Audit, Scrutiny and Petitions Board and two by the Petitions Board during the period covered by the report, three of which were continued from the previous reporting period. Details of the petitions received and their outcomes were set out in the appendix to the report.

**DECIDED:** That the Annual Report on petitions received and their outcomes, be noted.

## **2 Petition: Carers' Transport Costs**

Under reference to item 2 of the Minute of the meeting of this Board held on 8 June 2017, there was submitted a report by the Director of Finance & Resources relative to the Board's further consideration of the petition which had been submitted in the undernoted terms:

"Transport costs are a massive issue that affects so many carers of all ages, from as young as they start school till older adulthood. Many carers face huge financial difficulty and as a result are unable to have much of a social life of their own as they cannot afford to get around by public transport. The simple task of getting to shops, collecting medication from the chemist or doing many other things that come as part of the daily routine that carers face on a day to day basis.

Alongside a caring role it's important for carers to be able to attend support groups and meet with friends in order to have a healthy social life which many cannot do due to lack of money for buses or even trains depending on where you stay. As a result of being able to get out and about it allows the carer to be less stressed and lowers the chances of developing a mental health issue due to the many pressures of the caring role.

The cost of travel may not seem a lot of money to many however £4.00 per adult a day adds up to £28.00 a week (varies dependent on where you are for bus fares) which is a huge amount of the income a carer receives. Having concessionary travel or even a discount on travel for carers would be huge benefit to so many as many people say companion card is enough. However, people do not realise the cared for has to be present to allow card to be used, a carer is 9 out of 10 times on their own while traveling so as you see companion card is useless at this point.

45% of young adult carers (18-25) have reported that they have mental health problems due to their caring role and the struggles they face because of it.

68.8% of older carers say that being a carer has an adverse effect on their mental

health. This could be lessened by such a small change like concessionary or discounted travel. For young people aged 16-19 or in full time education who have a young Scot card you are entitled to a discounted rate of travel however, this discount is only valid on single journeys. In most cases this is no use to a carer as they are making return journeys especially if they are in further education and have a long distance to travel every day or do not live with the person they provide care for. Some carers have to travel many miles just to visit the person they care for if they are in specialised hospitals or care homes.

Being a carer is not all bad it has many positive aspects such as learning crucial skills such as observation skills, listening skills, budgeting skills, organisation skills, being trustworthy and so many more. These skills would be of so much use to the employment field but unfortunately not many employers see this. Carers do this on a daily basis because they care even when the cared for could end up in a hospital, care home or in a looked after residential setting. When this happens the carer will do whatever they can to get to the cared for even if it results in at times not eating or walking miles due to not having money for transport.

This is why I feel so strongly about getting support for carers when it comes to transport. I hope that carers and decision makers will get behind this campaign and help to change so many people's lives for the better.

Is free concessionary transport for carers really too much to ask for when carers dedicate their lives to provide care to others?"

The report advised that the Council had taken a decision on 1 May 2014 on a similar matter, following the motion that

"Council supports the Scottish Youth Parliament's campaign for young carers.

The cost of travel to school, work and to attend social activities can be prohibitive for young carers and to alleviate that Council calls on the Scottish Government to introduce and fund a scheme of concessionary travel for young people who have caring responsibilities.

Council also calls for the Student Awards Agency for Scotland to recognise young carers as vulnerable and be given access to additional bursaries to allow them to fully take up educational opportunities.

Council finally instructs officers within the Education department to review its policy on payments of the Educational Maintenance Allowance in order to provide clear and flexible guidance for schools when dealing with pupils whose attendance may be affected by caring responsibilities to be reported to a future meeting of the Education Policy Board".

The report indicated that the Head of Early Years and Inclusion had advised that there were new responsibilities for the Council and the Health and Social Care Partnership in addressing the needs of carers. Similarly the Head of Adult Services advised that Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership would jointly produce a Local Carer Strategy to coincide with the implementation of the Carers (Scotland) Act from 1 April 2018. Carers and carer organisations would be involved in planning, shaping and reviewing services for carers through the Partnership's Strategic Planning Group.

The report further indicated that the Regional Child Care Commissioning Co-ordinator had advised that engagement activities with young carers had commenced through the Carers' Centre and the issue of transport had already arisen through young people indicating that the cost of travel impeded their ability to have respite/breaks

from caring responsibilities. The Regional Child Care Commissioning Co-ordinator had also given an undertaking that the issue of transport would be explicitly addressed in the next sessions with young carers.

The petitioner was not in attendance but had submitted further information in relation to her petition in the following terms:

"I have had a reply from COSLA which has stated that to implement Concessionary travel for carers would cost a further £92 million. COSLA have said they are not yet convinced that concessionary travel for carers holds a greater need than ways in which they could provide help to lessen the burdens of a caring role.

My local MP Mhairi Black has informed me that a consultation on concessionary travel will be taking place in the near future however is still unsure what date but will let me know.

I met with Karen Nowland, the meeting went well, we had a lengthy discussion and Karen has assured me that she will be taking my petition on to the various boards in which she is a member".

The Head of Early Years and Inclusion advised the Board that Carers could access a companion card for use when they were travelling with the person they were caring for. They could not use that card if the person being cared for was not present so they could not use it to visit the person in hospital.

The Head of Early Years and Inclusion further intimated that it was estimated that there were 788,000 carers in Scotland and of these around 111,000 could qualify for the Carer's Allowance. Only 66,140 received the benefit (as at August 2015). To qualify for Carer's Allowance, carers must provide 'regular and substantial' care which was defined as at least 35 hours a week. They must be aged 16 or over and not be 'gainfully employed' or in full-time education, and the person they cared for must also be in receipt of a disability benefit at a certain level: Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance. The majority of those who did qualify for Carer's Allowance, but did not receive it, were pensioners. This was because they were subject to the 'overlapping benefits' rule, which meant that an individual could only receive one non-means tested benefit in full at the same time. Given the age restriction young carers were excluded from the benefit.

The Head of Early Years and Inclusion intimated that the Scottish Parliament had received written evidence from: Carers Scotland; Coalition of Carers; ENABLE; Transport Scotland; and COSLA. The Petitioner had provided some additional evidence to support her petition. The three charities indicated that they supported the principal of a concessionary transport scheme.

The Head of Early Years and Inclusion informed the Board that Transport Scotland had indicated that they could not fund a concessionary transport scheme for carers and suggested that perhaps local authorities should consider funding a scheme. They indicated that they could not provide an estimated cost for a concessionary scheme for carers like that in place for older adults. The older adult scheme cost around £192 million per annum. The Coalition of Carers estimated the cost of providing a concessionary transport scheme for carers at £14.2 million per annum.

The Head of Early Years and Inclusion provided statistics relative to Renfrewshire indicating that 11% of adults over the age of 16 in Renfrewshire identified they were a carer compared to 9% across Scotland in the 2011 census. 2% of those under 16 in Renfrewshire identified themselves as carers in the same census. This figure was the same as the Scottish figure. He advised that the Scottish Health Survey 2012/13

suggested that 17% of the 16+ adult population in Scotland and 4% of the under 16 child population were carers. The Children Count wellbeing survey undertaken between November 2016 and January 2017 found that 2.4% of children and young people aged 9 to 16 years were 'young carers'. This equated to 227 young people aged under 16. This survey was offered to all school pupils from P5 to S4 and achieved an 87% response rate – more than 10,000 pupils. The number of young carers aged 16 to 18 was not known but estimated to be in the region of 50. In addition 566 new carers received a service from the Carers Centre in 2015/16, this included 38 young carers.

The Convener proposed that Council take no further action on the Petition but refer it to the Scottish Parliament, as the Petition related to that organisation. This was agreed unanimously.

**DECIDED:**

- (i) That the terms of the Petition be noted; and
- (ii) That Council take no further action on the Petition but refer it to the Scottish Parliament, as the Petition related to that organisation.