

Minute of Meeting

Education and Children's Services Policy Board

| Date | Time | Venue |
|----------------------------|-------|--|
| Thursday, 02 November 2023 | 13:00 | Council Chambers (Renfrewshire), Council Headquarters, Renfrewshire House, Cotton Street, Paisley, PA1 1AN |

Present: Councillor Jennifer Adam, Councillor Fiona Airlie-Nicolson, Ms Mary Jane Bird, Provost Lorraine Cameron, Councillor Carolann Davidson, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Edward Grady, Councillor Gillian Graham, Councillor Anne Hannigan, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Alec Leishman, Councillor Iain McMillan, Councillor Will Mylet, Mr Jack Nellaney, Councillor Iain Nicolson, Councillor Jim Paterson, Councillor Emma Rodden, Mr Ravinder Singh, Councillor Ben Smith

Chair

Councillor Rodden, Convener, presided.

In Attendance

A MacArthur, Director of Finance & Resources; J Calder, Head of Education/Interim Chief Education Officer, G Lyons, Interim Head of Education, T McGillivray, Head of Education (Inclusion and Quality Improvement), and M McCargo, Children's Services Manager (all Children's Services); C Dalrymple, Head of Facilities & Property Management (Environment, Housing & Infrastructure); and M Conaghan, Head of Corporate Governance, R Conway, Finance Manager, E Gray, Senior Committee Services Officer and J Barron, Committee Services Officer (all Finance & Resources).

Webcasting of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that this meeting of the Board would be filmed for live or subsequent broadcast on the Council's internet site.

Apology

Councillor McGonigle.

Declarations of Interest

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

Transparency Statements

Councillor Paterson declared a connection in respect of Item 2 - Early Learning and Childcare – Payment of Sustainable Rates to Funded Providers – by reason of having a child who attended a childcare provider which would be in receipt of funding. However, he indicated that he had applied the objective test and did not consider he had an interest to declare and intimated that it was his intention to remain in the meeting and to take part in any discussion or voting thereon.

Councillor Davidson declared a connection in respect of Item 14 - Inspections of registered children's residential houses by the Care Inspectorate – by reason of having a daughter who was employed at the Barochan Road care home. However, she indicated that she had applied the objective test and did not consider she had an interest to declare and intimated that it was her intention to remain in the meeting and to take part in any discussion or voting thereon.

Valedictory

The Convener advised that this was the last meeting of the Policy Board that Julie Calder would attend while undertaking the role of Interim Chief Education Officer. The Convener thanked her for accepting the role and made reference to the help, support and advice which she had provided during this time. Other elected members took the opportunity to echo the sentiments expressed by the Convener.

1 Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Report

There was submitted a joint Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring report by the Director of Finance & Resources, Interim Chief Education Officer, and the Chief Social Work Officer for the period to 15 September 2023.

The report intimated that the projected Revenue outturn at 31 March 2024 for Children's Services was an overspend of £2.478 million against the revised budget for the year. The projected Capital outturn at 31 March 2024 for Children's Services was an underspend of £0.143 million.

DECIDED:

(a) That the projected Revenue outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 1 of the report be noted, and that it be further noted that the forecast position was based on best estimates and confirmed government support at the time;

(b) That the projected Capital outturn position for Children's Services detailed in Table 2 of the report be noted; and

(c) That the budget adjustments detailed in sections 4 and 6 of the report be noted.

2 **Early Learning and Childcare – Payment of Sustainable Rates to Funded Providers**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the rates paid by the Council for early learning and childcare places with approved funded providers (AFP) including private and voluntary sector nurseries and childminders.

The report provided detail on the Council's statutory duty to provide early learning and childcare (ELC) places to all eligible children and how this had been met through the provision of places in local authority, private and voluntary sector nurseries and with childminders. The report sought to set a sustainable rate paid to AFPs for 2023/24 at a level which supported the delivery of ELC in accordance with the National Standard and Council's Framework while ensuring best value for the Council. Further detail was provided on the consultation which had taken place.

DECIDED:

(a) That an increase to the hourly rate paid to Renfrewshire Council's Funded Providers for the provision of funded early learning and childcare from £5.71 to £5.97 from 16 August 2023 for any child aged 3 to 5 years accepted for funding under the Council's Framework be approved;

(b) That the continuation of the existing hourly rate of £8.50 paid to approved Funded Providers for early learning and childcare for any eligible child aged 2 to 3 years be approved; and

(c) That a review of the hourly rate paid to approved Funded Providers for early learning and childcare for any eligible child aged 2 to 3 years for future years be approved.

3 **Dargavel Housing Development – Impact on Denominational Education Provision**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Interim Education Officer relative to denominational school capacity relating to the Dargavel housing development.

The report set out that through the use of Edge analytics a 15-year forecasting exercise had been carried out to estimate the future demand on denominational education provision around the Dargavel housing development. The exercise concluded that there was sufficient capacity to meet the need for denominational primary education demand with only one primary school, St John Bosco, being at risk of having a minor capacity breach. It was however noted that should this occur, it could be managed within the availability across the wider campus which was shared with Bargarran Primary School.

In terms of denominational high school provision, it was noted that the catchment school, Trinity High School, was currently operating under capacity with 17% of the roll being non-catchment area pupils, many from outwith Renfrewshire, and pupils who attended non-denominational primary schools. The Edge analytics forecast suggested there was potential for a capacity breach but this could be managed by applying the Admissions Policy.

The Interim Chief Education Officer highlighted an error in section 4.5 of the report. Where the report stated there was a potential occupancy peak at St John Bosco Primary School of 286 pupils, this should have read 289 pupils.

DECIDED: That the content of the report be noted.

4 **Learning Estate Update**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to education provision in Dargavel.

The report confirmed that the missives had been concluded on an 8.5-acre site at the north end of Craighton Drive which had been identified at the preferred site for a new 800 space primary school and artificial sports pitch following the appraisal of options suggested by BAE, Elected Members, community representatives and members of the public. It was expected that a request to begin the formal statutory consultation on the establishment of the new school and associated catchment review would be submitted to the meeting of this Policy Board scheduled to be held on 18 January 2024.

The report highlighted a delay to the internal works at Dargavel Primary School which were due to be completed in October 2023. The works were now expected to be carried out during the summer break in 2024 to ensure there would be no disruption to learning and teaching while ensuring that the school would be ready in time for the 2024/25 session.

In terms of additional capacity for Park Mains High School, it was noted that a modular unit would be installed on site in November 2023 and that works to repurpose the unit would be completed by April 2024. Work around planning an extension for the school was also due to begin with the consultants, pupils, staff, and parents/carers coming together to discuss the requirements.

It was noted that the classroom block at Bishopton Primary School was due to be replaced with a permanent facility in time for the new school year in August 2024 and that the design of the new classroom block would mirror those located at Dargavel Primary School.

DECIDED: That the content of the report be noted.

5 **Paisley Grammar School Community Campus Update**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to progress towards the construction of the new Paisley Grammar School Community Campus.

The report provided background to the project and set out information relating to the budget, funding model, governance structure and design development together with the revised timescales which were agreed with the Scottish Government in April 2023. It was noted that the project was due for completion in the Summer of 2026, in line with the revised timescales.

DECIDED: That the content of the report be noted.

6 **School Holiday Arrangements School Session 2024/2025**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the proposed school holiday arrangements for the school session beginning August 2024. The proposed holiday arrangements were set out at Appendix 1 to the report with a summary of the consultation responses set out at Appendix 2.

The report intimated that following discussions with trade unions the decision had been taken not to offer three proposals for the holiday arrangements as had been done in previous years as it was felt that the option being proposed for 2024/2025 provided the pattern of holidays that the majority of staff, pupils and parents voted for annually. Staff, pupils and parents had been given the opportunity to comment on the proposal.

DECIDED: That the Interim Chief Education Officer be authorised to set school holiday arrangements for academic year 2024/2025 in line with the dates set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

7 **Standard Circular 57 – Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the revised Standard Circular 57 – Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People. A copy of the Standard Circular was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

The report advised that the national guidance for child protection in Scotland had been updated in 2021, that a further update was provided in August 2023 and that the revised Standard Circular 57 reflected these changes. It was noted that should Standard Circular 57 be approved then it would be adopted in all educational establishments in Renfrewshire.

DECIDED:

(a) That Standard Circular 57 be approved; and

(b) That the Interim Chief Education Officer be instructed to take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early learning and childcare settings.

8 **National Qualifications Results 2023**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to attainment in the Scottish Qualification Authority National Qualifications in 2023 based on key measures contained within the Insight benchmarking tool.

The report detailed how the Insight benchmarking tool was used by schools and education authorities and the four key measures which were used to analyse attainment. A summary was provided for each key measure at S4, S5 and S6 along with comparisons to national averages.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted;
- (b) That the efforts of pupils and the school communities in achieving these results be noted; and
- (c) That it be agreed that a further report be submitted to a meeting of this Policy Board when leavers' data became available.

9 **Children's Services 2023/24 Service Improvement Plan Mid-Year Monitoring Report**

There was submitted a joint report by the Chief Social Work Officer and Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the performance and achievements of the service during the period 1 April to 30 September 2023.

The report stated that the Service Improvement Plan 2023/26 for Children's Services, approved at the meeting of this Policy Board held on 18 May 2023, set out the priorities for the development of the service over a three year period, the actions which would ensure continuous improvement across the service and the performance indicators which ensured the impacts could be measured. The report provided details of the key achievements of the Service during the period; a progress update on implementing the action plan linked to the Service Improvement Plan; an assessment of performance in relation to the service scorecard of core performance indicators; and an overview of priorities for the service over the next six months.

DECIDED:

- (a) That the content of the report be noted; and
- (b) That the achievements of Children's Services during the first six months of 2023/24, which fell within the remit of this Policy Board, be noted.

10 **Education Standards & Quality Report September 2023 & Education Improvement Plan 2023/24**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the Council's annual Education Standards & Quality Report (September 2023) and the Education Improvement Plan (2023/24), both of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The report advised that both the Education Standards & Quality Report and Education Improvement Plan aligned to the National Improvement Framework for Scottish education and set out the data inputs which were used to produce the content and assess progress of the priorities for 2022/23 and to identify the priorities for improvement for the period 2023/24.

The report made reference to the five priority areas for 2023/24 and set out the portfolio planning approach which would be used to help achieve these. Full details on each were included in the appended Education Improvement Plan.

DECIDED:

(a) That the content of the Education Standards & Quality Report (September 2023), as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and

(b) That the content of the Education Improvement Plan (2023/24), as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.

11 **West Partnership Improvement Plan and Evaluation Report**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the evaluation of work undertaken by the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaboration) in 2022/23 as well as details on the development of the Improvement Plan for 2023/24. Copies of both the Evaluation Report and the Improvement Plan were appended to the report.

The report captured the progress made against the main West Partnership workstreams for 2022/23 together with the evaluation process and the process which was followed to develop the improvement plan for 2022/23.

DECIDED:

(a) That the content of the West Partnership Improvement Plan 2023/24 be noted; and

(b) That the content of the West Partnership Report 2022/23 be noted.

12 **Education Scotland Inspection of St Mary's Primary School**

There was submitted a report by the Interim Chief Education Officer relative to the results of an inspection of St Mary's Primary School carried out by Education Scotland. A link to the letter sent by Education Scotland to the parents and carers of pupils detailing the outcome of the inspection was available in the report.

The report advised that an inspection of St Mary's Primary School had been carried out by Education Scotland in February 2023 with a focus on two quality indicators, learning, teaching and assessment and raising attainment and achievement. The inspection report was appended to the report and detailed three areas of key strength and one area for further improvement.

DECIDED: That the key strengths highlighted in the Education Scotland inspection report on St Mary's Primary School be noted and celebrated and that the area for further improvement be recognised.

13 **Children at Risk of Harm Inspection Process**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Social Work Officer relative to the process followed by the Care Inspectorate when undertaking inspections of services for children and young people at risk of harm.

The report advised that an inspection of children's services in Renfrewshire was last undertaken by the Care Inspectorate in 2015 and that it was anticipated that notification of an inspection would be received in the near future.

Information was provided around the role of the Care Inspectorate, the aims, scope and process followed during their inspections and the notice provided prior to an inspection together with the associated timescales. Details were also provided on the preparatory work which was being undertaken in Renfrewshire prior to an inspection.

DECIDED: That the content of the report be noted.

14 **Inspections of registered children's residential houses by the Care Inspectorate**

There was submitted a report by Chief Social Work Officer relative to inspections which had been carried out at children's residential houses by the Care Inspectorate. Inspections had been undertaken at the Barochan Road and Beech Avenue residential homes and the inspection reports were set out at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report respectively.

The report intimated that both the Barochan Road and Beech Avenue residential homes were graded overall as adequate following inspection and that the Care Inspectorate made a requirement in relation to Beech Avenue and noted three areas for improvement. Two areas for improvement were noted in relation to Barochan Road.

Individual improvement action plans had been implemented for each residential home and the progress against these was being led by the House Managers and overseen by the Acting Children's Services Manager and the Chief Social Work Officer. It was noted that an update on the improvement activity would be submitted to the meeting of this Policy Board to be held on 14 March 2024.

DECIDED:

(a) That the outcome of the inspections at Beech and Barochan children's residential homes be noted; and

(b) That it be noted that an update on the improvement activity would be submitted to the meeting of this Policy Board to be held on 14 March 2024.

15 **Scottish Recommended Allowance for Foster Carers and Kinship Carers**

There was submitted a report by the Chief Social Work Officer relative to the allowance paid by the Council to kinship carers and foster carers.

The report advised that on 29 August 2023 the Scottish Government and COSLA agreed a Scottish recommended maintenance allowance should be paid to foster carers and kinship carers for children in their care and that this would be split into three bands based on the age of the child. The Scottish Government and COSLA agreed the new allowance should be paid from 1 April 2023.

It was noted that the rate paid by Renfrewshire for the standard allowance was lower than the Scottish recommended allowance, resulting in all foster carers and kinship carers benefiting from an uplift. Figures were provided detailing the new rates and the financial impact of the uplift to the Council.

The Chief Social Work Officer following discussion with the Leader of the Council, the Convener of the Education and Children's Services Policy Board, and the Director of Finance & Resources had agreed to implement the Scottish recommended allowance ensuring an uplift in the standard allowance.

DECIDED:

(a) That the introduction of a national Scottish recommended allowance for a child to be paid to foster carers and kinship carers be noted;

(b) That the decision by the Chief Social Work Officer to pay foster carers and kinship carers in Renfrewshire the Scottish recommended allowance backdated to 1 April 2023 be homologated; and

(c) That it be agreed that Renfrewshire's foster carers and kinship carers would continue to be paid the Scottish recommended allowance for standard allowances.