

## Minute of Meeting

### Education and Children's Services Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 18 March 2021	13:00	Remotely via Microsoft Teams,

#### Present

Provost Lorraine Cameron, Councillor Natalie Don, Councillor Edward Grady, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Jim Harte, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Karen Kennedy, Councillor Scott Kerr, Councillor John McNaughtan, Councillor Will Mylet, Councillor Iain Nicolson, Councillor Jim Paterson, Councillor John Shaw, Councillor Jane Strang

#### Chair

Councillor Paterson, Convener, presided.

#### In Attendance

S Quinn, Director of Children's Services; J Calder, Head of Service (Curriculum and Quality), G McKinlay, Head of Schools and J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice (all Children's Services); J Connolly, Senior Communications Officer (Chief Executive's); G McLachlan, Senior Finance Manager, L Belshaw, Democratic Services Manager, G Dickie, Partnering & Commissioning Manager, R Devine, Senior Committee Services Officer and D Pole, End User Technician (all Finance & Resources).

#### Recording of Meeting

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Convener intimated that the meeting of the Board would be recorded and that the recording would be available to watch on the Council's website.

#### Apologies

Councillor Rodden, Ms Bird, Mr Nellaney and Mr Singh.

## **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Graham declared an interest in item 8 of the agenda as he was a volunteer with Barnardos which was referenced in the report.

Councillor Graham declared an interest in item 9 of the agenda as he had signed the petition as a local elected member.

## **1 Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report**

There was submitted a joint revenue and capital budget monitoring report by the Directors of Finance & Resources and Children's Services for the period to 8 January 2021. The report projected that there would be a breakeven position for both revenue and capital at 31 March 2021 and noted that for financial year 2020/21 the projected outturn position was split into core and Covid-19 related variances.

### **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 this point in time. Forecasts were likely to be subject to considerable fluctuation as the full service implications and associated costs of the pandemic became clear. The service would continue to mitigate as far as possible any overspend and would apply the flexibility within specific grant funding permitted by the Scottish Government in order to achieve a breakeven revenue outturn position; and

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

## **2 Children's Services Service Delivery Plan 2021- 22**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Children's Services Delivery Plan 2021/22.

The report advised that typically, Services reported on their performance and intended improvement actions through Service Improvement Plans. The Service Delivery Plan sat beneath the Council Plan, Community Plan, and alongside the Risk Management Plan and the People Strategy to form a suite of documents which provided the strategic direction for the Service. The Plan also complemented the Council-wide Economic Recovery Plan and Social Renewal Plan.

The report indicated that the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted significantly on how services were delivered, on the needs of the community and consequently, services had produced Service Delivery Plans for 2021/22 which outlined the actions that would be taken to assist in recovery over the next 12-month period. The Council however remained aspirational and the Plan also reflected a commitment from Children's Services to continuous improvement and to deliver a wide range of ambitious improvement programmes and projects. The Plan detailed the priorities being addressed; the key tasks to be implemented; the implementation timetable and measures of success. A six-monthly update on progress of the Service Delivery Plan

would be submitted to the appropriate Policy Boards in autumn 2021, and an outturn report submitted in early summer 2022.

**DECIDED:**

- (a) That the elements of the Service Delivery Plan which fell within the remit of this Board be approved;
- (b) That it be agreed that mid-year progress with the Service Delivery Plan be reported to this Board in October 2021; and
- (c) That it be noted that this Service Delivery Plan had been submitted to the meeting of the Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board held on 16 March 2021 for approval of the elements covered by that Board's remit.

### **3 Education Update**

There was submitted an update report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the steps taken to support families during the period of lockdown and to provide an update on the current phased reopening of schools. It was noted that schools and early year centres had been closed for most children and young people throughout January and February 2021. The report intimated that a phased reopening of schools had now commenced and it was anticipated that this would continue over the coming weeks.

**DECIDED:** That the report be noted.

### **4 Attainment of 2019/20 School Leavers**

Under reference to item 7 of the Minute of the meeting of this Board held on 21 January 2021 there was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the attainment of 2019/20 school leavers in the key measures contained in the Insight benchmarking tool, which was a Scottish Government performance evaluation tool to benchmark performance in four key measures: attainment in literacy and numeracy; improving attainment for all; attainment versus deprivation; and leavers' destinations. The report intimated that due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2020 exam diet could not take place and that results were awarded based on teacher estimates and were therefore not directly comparable with previous years. The report noted that destinations would also be impacted by the pandemic as the same range of opportunities might not have been available to young people.

The report provided information on attainment in literacy and numeracy; improving attainment for all; attainment versus deprivation and leaver destinations. The report also recognised the scope for further improvement and indicated that this would continue to be a priority.

**DECIDED:**

- (a) That the report be noted; and
- (b) That the efforts of young people and the school communities in bringing about these results be noted.

## **5 Distribution of Funding to Support Services for Children and Families – Funding Allocation for 2021/22**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the proposed allocation of funding during 2021/22 to out of school care groups in the private and voluntary sectors and for early years voluntary sector organisations, playgroups and toddler groups. The report noted that acceptance of the recommendations contained in the appendices to the report would result in £89,817 being disbursed.

### **DECIDED:**

- (a) That the resource allocation to support the delivery of services for children and young people, as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and
- (b) That the proposed allocation of grant funding for out of school care and to the pre-five voluntary sector as detailed in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report be approved, subject to the completion of satisfactory checks and assessments.

## **6 Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to The Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 which had been passed by the Scottish Parliament in October 2019 and which removed the common law defence of 'reasonable chastisement' from the law of Scotland on 7 November 2020.

The report intimated that the Act made it illegal to use physical punishment towards a child in Scotland and required Scottish Ministers to take steps to raise public awareness and understanding about the effect of the removal of the defence of reasonable chastisement. The legislative change required statutory agencies to consider their current procedural guidance and training in relation to physical chastisement of children and the report provided information on how services in Renfrewshire had responded to the new legislation.

### **DECIDED:**

- (a) That it be noted that the Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019 came into force on 7 November 2020; and
- (b) That the work undertaken to provide updated guidance and training to Council and Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee partner agency staff on the change of legislation be noted.

## **7 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill (UNCRC) which had been introduced to the Scottish Parliament on 1 September 2020. The report intimated that the Bill was now at stage 3 and the Scottish Parliament would consider any amendment to the Bill, debate these and vote on whether it should become law. Should the Bill make the UNCRC part of Scottish law, this would mean the Scottish Government and other public bodies, including local authorities, would be required to respect the UNCRC as law and that courts could be asked to decide if the government or other public bodies had respected or broken its terms.

The appendix to the report summarised the rights covered by the UNCRC, some examples of which were: respect for the views of the child; protection from violence, abuse and neglect; right to an education and juvenile justice.

**DECIDED:**

- (a) That the progress to date in relation to the United Nations on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament be noted; and
- (b) That the implication for Renfrewshire when the Bill became law, be noted.

## **8 Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Graham, having previously declared an interest in the following item, remained in the meeting.

## **9 “Missing People” Project Renfrewshire**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Renfrewshire 'Missing People' project. The report intimated that in late 2012 Police Scotland raised concerns at the Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee (RCPC) in respect of young people under the age of 18 who were leaving their children's house or family home and going missing for a period of time ranging from a few hours to a number of days. RCPC asked Police Scotland and Children's Services Social Work to develop a proposal for improving the response to these incidents. A service model was developed and commissioned from Barnardo's Scotland and became operational in March 2013 and in 2017 the Scottish Government published the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland. It was noted that there were more than 20,000 incidents of missing children and adults reported to Police Scotland every year.

The report indicated that to ensure that the National Missing Persons Framework was implemented effectively across Scotland, 'Missing People', a national charity had been funded by the Scottish Government to deliver a programme of consultancy, training and good practice sharing to local areas. Renfrewshire had submitted an expression of interest to participate in the National Missing Persons Framework Implementation Project, which was successful. It was agreed that the support would largely focus on adults who went missing. However, opportunities to further develop the expertise relating to children and young people had also been pursued and the report provided information on the work undertaken to date by Children's Services.

**DECIDED:** That the work being undertaken by Children's Services in partnership with the Missing People Project in response to the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland be noted.

## **10 Declaration of Interest**

Councillor Graham, having previously declared an interest in the following item, remained in the meeting.

## **11 Petition: Early Learning and Childcare Admission Policy Review**

Under reference to item 1 of the Minute of the meeting of the Petitions Board held on 1 February 2021, there was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the petition which had been submitted by Mr Steven Harrigan relating to his concerns that his son had been denied the opportunity to attend his local pre-school nursery. The Petitions Board had agreed that the petition be referred to the Education & Children's Services Policy Board with the recommendation that the Board review the current admissions policy in relation to Early Learning and Childcare across Renfrewshire.

**DECIDED:** That it be noted that a review of the current Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy would be undertaken and that the findings would be reported to a future meeting of this Policy Board.