

Minute of Meeting Education and Children's Services Policy Board

Date	Time	Venue
Thursday, 20 January 2022	13:00	Microsoft Teams Meeting,

Present: Ms Mary Jane Bird, Provost Lorraine Cameron, Councillor Karen Devine-Kennedy, Councillor Audrey Doig, Councillor Edward Grady, Councillor Neill Graham, Councillor Jim Harte, Councillor John Hood, Councillor Lisa-Marie Hughes, Councillor Scott Kerr, Councillor John McNaughtan, Mr Jack Nellaney, Councillor Iain Nicolson, Councillor Jim Paterson, Councillor Emma Rodden, Councillor John Shaw, Mr Ravinder Singh, Councillor Jane Strang

Webcast of Meeting

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

In Attendance

S Quinn, Director of Children's Services, J Calder, Head of Service (Curriculum & Quality), T Stewart, Head of Education, J Trainer, Head of Childcare & Criminal Justice (all Children's Services); J Connolly, Senior Communications Officer (Chief Executive's); and G McLachlan, Senior Finance Manager, G Dickie, Partnering & Commissioning Manager, R Devine, E Gray and P Shiach, Senior Democratic Services Officers, D Cunningham, Assistant Committee Services Officer, and D Pole, End User Technician (all Finance & Resources).

Declarations of Interest

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

1 **Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring as at 12 November 2021**

There was submitted a joint revenue and capital budget monitoring report by the Directors of Children's Services and the Acting Director of Finance & Resources for the period to 12 November 2021.

The report projected a revenue overspend of £0.439 million and an underspend of £0.1 million in respect of capital as at 31 March 2022 for Children's Services. It was noted that for financial year 2021/22 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 the time and that forecasts were likely to be subject to fluctuation as the year progressed. The service would continue to mitigate any overspend as far as possible;

(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 **National Qualifications Results 2021**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to attainment in the Scottish Qualification Authority National Qualifications in 2021 based on key measures contained within the Insight benchmarking tool.

The report outlined the Insight benchmarking tool 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 efforts of pupils and the school communities in bringing about the reported results be noted;

(b) That it be noted that a further report would be brought to this Policy Board when leavers data became available; and

(c) That report be noted.

3 **Education Standards & Quality Report September 2021 Education Improvement Plan 2021/22**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to Renfrewshire's Education Standards & Quality Report (September 2021) and Education Improvement Plan (2021/22) which had been developed in line with the statutory guidance and through consultation with a variety of stakeholders. Copies of both the Standards & Quality Report and the Improvement Plan were appended to the report.

The report set out how both the Standards and Quality Report and the Education Improvement Plan aligned to the National Improvement Framework for Scottish education and how a wide range of data had been used to report on the progress and impact of the improvement priorities during session 2020/21 and to identify priorities for recovery and improvement for the period 2021/22.

Details were provided around the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on schools and pupils, including remote learning, the cancellation of the exam diet and its replacement with the Alternative Certification model and difficulty in maintaining staffing levels due to Covid-19 absences. Progress had been made in a number of areas identified in the previous Education Improvement Plan while others had been carried forward into the 2021/22 plan.

DECIDED:

(a) That the content of the Education Standards & Quality Report (September 2021), as set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted; and

(b) That the content of the Education Improvement Plan (2021/22), as set out at Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.

4 **Consultation on Education Reform**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to a response which had been submitted to the Scottish Government's Consultation on Education Reform. A copy of the response was appended to the report.

The consultation exercise was undertaken from 30 September to 26 November 2021 following the Scottish Government's announcement that it was their intention to replace the SQA and consider a new specialist agency for both curriculum and assessment while also taking forward reform to Education Scotland, including removing the function of inspection from the agency.

The report noted that the consultation response was submitted prior to the 26 November 2021 deadline and that the Scottish Government would provide an analysis of the responses in early 2022.

DECIDED: That the response to the Education Reform Consultation, as submitted on 25 November 2022 be homologated.

5 **Early Learning and Childcare Consultation - 2021**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the findings of the early learning and childcare consultation carried out by Renfrewshire Council during August and September 2021. A summary of the consultation findings was appended to the report.

The report outlined the background to the consultation which required to be undertaken every two years as prescribed by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. A total of 940 responses had been submitted and the report provided a breakdown of the demographic of the respondents as well as a summary of the responses. Key findings were set out for Early Learning and Child Care (0-5 years) and Out of School Care (school age).

DECIDED: That the findings of the Early Learning and Childcare Consultation 2021, as appended to the report, be noted.

6 **Standard Circular 3a - Early Learning and Childcare Admission Policy**

under reference to item 11 of the Minute of the meeting of this Policy Board held on 18 March 2021, there was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the review and proposed revision to Standard Circular 3a which detailed the Early Year's Admissions Policy and guidance on the implementation of the policy.

The existing Standard Circular 3a had been approved at a meeting of this Policy Board held on 1 November 2018. On 18 March 2021 this Policy Board had agreed to review the policy following a recommendation by the Petitions board on 1 February 2021. This review was undertaken and heads of early years establishments and colleagues from health and social work were consulted on the revisions to the policy and guidance. The proposed amendments to the policy were set out in the report.

In line with the Scottish Government Blueprint for 2020, a review of admissions panel areas was also undertaken and included consultation with heads from each local panel area to better understand local needs and issues. Consultation also took place with parents on the accessibility of early learning and childcare provision.

DECIDED:

(a) That the revised Standard Circular 3a: Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy, set out at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved; and

(b) That the outcome to the review of the geographical admissions panel areas, as set out in section 5 of the report and Appendix 2 to the report, be noted.

7 **Church Representatives on Committees Appointed by Education Authorities**

There was submitted a report by the Acting Director of Finance & Resources relative to the process for seeking nominations for church representation on the committee or board which would determine Education Authority matters following the Local Government Elections on 5 May 2022.

The report outlined the legislation which prescribed that where an education authority appointed a committee whose purposes included advising the authority on any matter relating to the discharge of their functions as education authority or discharging any of those functions of the authority on their behalf, three of the members to be appointed (who should not be members of the education authority) should be church representatives. One of the three places required to be filled, in accordance with the Act, by a nomination from the Church of Scotland and one by the Roman Catholic Church.

It was noted that the current church members' appointments did not continue beyond the Scottish Local Government Elections on 5 May 2022. The report detailed proposals to invite the Church of Scotland and Roman Catholic Church to submit a nomination and that an advert be placed in the local and national press and online seeking nominations to fill the remaining position.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the existing church members' appointments to the Education and Children's Services Policy Board would not continue beyond the local government election to be held on 5 May 2022;

(b) That it be agreed that the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church be invited to nominate their respective representatives to the committee or board which may be established by the new Council to deal with education functions, and that these be reported to the statutory meeting of the new Council to be held on 19 May 2022; and

(c) That an advertisement be placed in the local and national press and on the Council's website to seek nominations for the third church representative and that a report on the responses to the advertisement be submitted to the statutory meeting of the new Council to be held on 19 May 2022.

8 **Redress for Survivors (Historical Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry into historic abuse of children in care in Scotland and a redress scheme established to provide recognition of the harm caused to survivors.

On 22 March 2021 the Scottish Parliament passed the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021 and it received the Royal Assent on 23 April 2021. This established a new non-governmental public body, Redress Scotland, responsible for the assessment of applications from survivors and taking

decisions around the financial redress award(s) for the following five years. The scheme would provide financial and non-financial redress for survivors. The report outlined Qualified One-way Cost Shifting which was introduced in Scotland in June 2021 and would have an impact on all civil litigation claims going forward. It was suggested that for historical abuse claimants who chose civil litigation over the redress scheme, this would make it more likely that some claims would be settled.

DECIDED:

(a) That it be noted that the Redress for Survivors (Historical Child Abuse in Care) (Scotland) Act 2021 received Royal Assent on 23 April 2021;

(b) That it be noted that a new non-governmental public body, Redress Scotland had been established to assess and take decisions on applications from victims of historical abuse in care; and

(c) That it be noted that because victims could make applications to pursue claims via Court this could result in higher litigation costs arising from Qualified One-way Cost Shifting in respect of historical abuse claims.

9 **Annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service 2020/21 Update on developments for Looked After Children and Fostering Service**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the annual report of the Fostering and Adoption Service for 2020/21. The report was set in the context of the broader issues pertaining to Looked After and Accommodated Children.

The report covered the period August 2020 to July 2021 to tie in with the Scottish Government's reporting timetable for children's social work statistics and set out how the service managed and developed during the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic and considered the future work of the fostering and adoption panels.

DECIDED:

(a) That the contents of the Fostering and Adoption Annual Report 2020/21 be noted;

(b) That the continuing effort to secure foster carers and adoptive parents for Renfrewshire's children who required an alternative family placement be noted; and

(c) That the Service's continued development throughout the pandemic be noted.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Graham declared a non-financial interest in respect of the following agenda item as he carried out volunteer work with the children's charity Barnardo's.

10 **Renfrewshire’s Promise: An update on the work within Renfrewshire to deliver “The Promise” to Scotland’s children**

There was submitted a report by the Director of Children's Services relative to the delivery of The Promise to Scotland's children in Renfrewshire.

The report provided a background to The Promise which was adopted following an independent review into Scotland's care system and narrated a vision for Scotland based on voice, family, care, people and scaffolding. It pledged that all children in Scotland would grow up ‘loved, safe and respected’.

On 4 September 2020, the Council had agreed to the development of a delivery plan for how Renfrewshire would deliver The Promise. This Policy Board then considered the delivery plan in January 2021.

The report provided an update on the work which had been undertaken within Renfrewshire to deliver The Promise.

DECIDED:

(a) That the work being undertaken within Renfrewshire to "Keep the Promise" be noted; and

(b) That it be noted that regular update reports would be submitted to future meetings of this Policy Board to inform members on implications for policy and practice in Renfrewshire as the Promise work progressed.