

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 1 June 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors LYNNE DEVINE, MARTIN SHEPHERD, CHRIS BEATTIE, JULIE BELL, KENNY BRAES, IAIN GALL, ROSS GREIG, MARK McDONALD, GEORGE MEECHAN, LLOYD MELVILLE, GAVIN NICOL, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, LOIS SPEED, DEREK WANN and BETH WHITESIDE.

Councillor DEVINE, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to the commencement of the business, the Convener intimated that a request for a deputation had been received from Mrs Tunbridge, President of Monifieth Out of School Care Club in relation to Item 9 – Procedures for Letting of Education Premises.

The Committee agreed to hear the deputation immediately prior to consideration of the Item.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs Jackie Wilson, Church Representative.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

Councillor Shepherd declared an interest in Item 7 as a relative was employed at one of the establishments detailed in the Report. He indicated that he would not take part in any discussion and voting and would leave the meeting during consideration of the item.

3. MINUTES

(a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 14 February 2023 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Special Meeting

The minute of Special meeting of this Committee of 2 March 2023 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(c) Staffing Sub-Committee

The minutes of meetings of the Staffing Sub-Committee of 14 February and 25 April 2023, copies of which are appended hereto, were submitted and noted (**APPENDICES I & II**).

4. ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING PANEL – ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 20 September 2022, there was submitted Report No 157/23 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice advising members of the production of the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report.

The Report highlighted the Council's ability to provide an effective service for children, foster carers, kinship carers and adoptive parents and noted the demand on the resources, as well as services provided.

Following questions and comments, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report, as appended to the Report; and
- (iii) to note that the Report would be made publicly available on the Council's website.

5. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 21 September 2021, there was submitted Report No 158/23 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice providing an update about Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children in Angus, who were identified and transferred through the Home Office National Transfer Scheme.

The National Transfer Scheme commenced in July 2021 as a voluntary 'opt-in' scheme, the aim being to achieve a more even distribution of eligible children and young people across the United Kingdom. In February 2022, the scheme was made mandatory by the UK Government and a dispersal rota was implemented. Since the rota was mandated, Angus had received seven young people. Recent changes to the rota had increased the minimum requirement of each local authority from 0.07% to 0.1% of the total child population and it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in the number of children allocated to Angus over the coming year. Retrospective financial support for care, education/training and social support needs was provided per child received into local authority care.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the progress and future challenges in respect of receiving, supporting, and integrating unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into Angus communities;
- (ii) to note that all corporate parenting responsibilities extend to this group of children and young people; and
- (iii) to require the Director of Children, Families and Justice to report to Committee any emerging significant resource issues impacting upon the ability of the local authority to meet the obligations arising under the National Transfer Scheme.

6. GRANT FUNDING – WHOLE FAMILY WELLBEING

There was submitted Report No 159/23 by the Depute Chief Executive updating members on the allocation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund in Angus, seeking approval to accept the grant and establish a spending plan in line with local need.

The Report advised that the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund was announced in September 2021 and formed part of the Scottish Government's 'Keeping the Promise' implementation plan. The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund would cause a significant level of funding to come to local authorities on behalf of children's services planning partnerships, between 2022 and 2026, the purpose of which was to enable growth in the range of supports and services available to families in their local communities. The aim of the fund was to enable families to remain together, where it was safe to do so, and to prevent children coming into the care system.

Following a number of questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the content of the Report and the progress towards developing and supporting community whole family wellbeing services;
- (ii) to accept the grant allocation for 2022/23 and 2023/24 and note that the funding came to the council but was to be directed by the Angus Integrated Children's Services Partnership (AICSP);
- (iii) to delegate decision making to the Depute Chief Executive; and
- (iv) to note that Reports on the use of the fund would be submitted to the AICSP with information reports brought to members once the full programme had been established.

Having declared an interest at Article 2 above, Councillor Shepherd left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

7. ANGUS LEARNING ESTATE UPDATE

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 17 December 2020, there was submitted Report No 160/23 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing members with an update on the Angus Council Schools for the Future Programme.

The Report provided details of the review of the previously agreed projects for Phase 2019-2023, for Arbroath Secondary Schools and Reimaging Montrose and advised that alongside consideration of the learning estate, officers had been exploring where other opportunities for efficiency may exist. An opportunity has been identified to rationalise the management framework for the ELC settings based at the Abbey View Campus in Arbroath. The Report also identified the need for best value and that consideration may be given to the mothballing of settings with very low levels of occupancy.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to delegate authority to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to make minor updates to the School Investment Strategy document;
- (ii) to approve the proposed framework for management of the Angus learning estate, including the Mothballing Policy detailed in Appendix 2;
- (iii) to approve the removal of the Arbroath Secondary Schools and Reimagining Montrose projects from the Angus Schools for the Future Programme;
- (iv) to approve the proposal paper detailed in Appendix 3 and that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning undertake a statutory consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 in relation to changes in Early Learning and Childcare provision at the Abbey View Campus; and
- (v) that the outcome of the statutory consultation outlined in recommendation (iv) above would be reverted to this Committee for their consideration and decision.

In accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 16(11)(ii) Councillor Greig requested that his dissent be recorded in relation to (iii) of the foregoing decision.

Councillor Shepherd re-joined the meeting.

8. OPEN FRAMEWORK (AUGUST 2020 – JULY 2025) FOR FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE – SUSTAINABLE HOURLY RATES

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 14 June 2022, there was submitted Report No 161/23 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning outlining the challenges the council was facing in terms of the affordability of the rates. The Report also sought approval for amendments to the methodology for setting sustainable rates and to delegate authority for the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to make future revisions to the methodology and rates.

The expiry of the Open Framework on 31 July 2023 gave the Council the opportunity to review the terms of the agreement as part of the process for extending it. The Report proposed that a number of changes be made to the sustainable rate setting process from August 2023, full details of which were outlined in Section 6 of the Report. The changes proposed would help to ensure provision remained affordable and provided best value.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the expiry of the Open Framework on 31 July 2023 and the council's plan to extend it by 12 months initially, to 31 July 2024;
- (ii) to note the hourly rates from April 2023 detailed at Section 4 of the Report, approved by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in consultation with the Convener of Children and Learning and the Director of Finance;

- (iii) to note the duty placed on local authorities in Funding Follows the Child to ensure that the hourly rates paid were sustainable for the provider and affordable for the authority; and considers the affordability issues outlined at Section 5 of the Report;
- (iv) to approve the revisions to the methodology for sustainable rate setting from August 2023 detailed at Section 6 of the Report - the removal of 'staff training' from provider costs; the removal of 10p per hour for snack; the reduction in the percentage paid for profit/surplus, from 8% to 6%; and the use of local cost analysis data instead of Ipsos-Mori survey data; and
- (v) to delegate authority to the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to review and amend the sustainable rate setting methodology and to approve all future hourly rate changes (increase or decrease) up to a value of 10%, having noted that such delegation would only be exercised in consultation with the Convener of Children and Learning and the Director of Finance.

Deputation

At this stage, and having agreed to hear the deputation previously, Mrs Tunbridge addressed the meeting regarding Report No 162/23 Procedures for Letting of Education Premises. She advised that she was representing Monifieth After School Club who had issued letters to members of the Children and Learning Committee regarding the consultation on the proposed changes to the letting of educational premises which was imperative to the survival of After School Clubs in Angus. The consequences of changes to the current arrangements and charges would have an enormous impact on the parents using the service.

She indicated that the current arrangements had been in place since 1996 when out of school care was established in the Angus area and had proved to be a successful model of delivery in most cases. She requested the Committee to approve full and meaningful consultation with the Clubs to allow the valuable childcare services to continue to provide the quality and affordable childcare which they had delivered to Angus families for so many years with the Council support.

Thereafter she asked the Committee to agree the recommendations within the Report and to give an indication as to when this consultation might commence.

The Convener thanked Mrs Tunbridge for her presentation.

9. PROCEDURES FOR LETTING OF EDUCATION PREMISES

There was submitted Report No 162/23 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing the Committee with an update on procedures for the letting of education premises and bringing forward proposals for a review of the current procedures.

The Report indicated that the current pricing structure for the letting of educational premises was established historically. Charges were dependent on day of the week of the hire, category of facility hired, the legal status of organisation hiring, the geographical area of the community the hiring organisation supported, the length of the hire, and the quantity of facilities hired. In addition to the published charging framework, there were various legacy arrangements whereby some stakeholders were not charged for lets.

The current charging framework required simplification and a clearer rationale for charges. Angus Council was committed to supporting groups to use educational premises but had a duty to ensure any use was in line with Best Value, as outlined in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning undertakes consultation with stakeholders with regards to the charges and procedures associated with education lets; and
- (ii) to request that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning reverts to this Committee with any proposals for revised procedures by February 2024.