

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **FAMILY, EDUCATION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 30 May 2024 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors LYNNE DEVINE, BILL DUFF, CHRIS BEATTIE, KENNY BRAES, BRIAN BOYD, IAIN GALL, ROSS GREIG, GEORGE MEECHAN, LLOYD MELVILLE, GAVIN NICOL, LOUISE NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, LOIS SPEED, DEREK WANN and BETH WHITESIDE.

Church

Representative: Mrs CHRISTINE HAY.

Teacher

Representative: Mr MIKE CALLAGHAN and Mrs ANNA CHEYNE.

Councillor DEVINE, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to commencing the business, the Convener reminded members that it was currently the pre-election period in light of the forthcoming UK Parliamentary General Election on 4 July 2024 and that members were to be mindful of the legal requirements in their discussion and debate today.

Thereafter, the Convener paid tribute to Mr Mark Armstrong who was retiring from his position of Depute Chief Executive with Angus Council. Mark had worked with Angus Council for the past 11 years and had provided much advice and support to the Committee during that time. The Convener commended him for his work as Chair of Angus Corporate Patenting Board noting that he had been instrumental in the success of the "Anti-Poverty Strategy" and "The Angus Promise". The Convener, on behalf of the Committee, wished Mark a long, happy and healthy retirement.

At this stage in the meeting, the Convener intimated that an emergency motion in relation to the Withdrawal of Primary one Early year's practitioners from Angus Education settings had been received outwith the required 14 clear days' notice in terms of Standing Order 24(1).

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Shepherd, Bell and Clark with Councillors Duff and Boyd substituting respectively for Councillors Shepherd and Clark. Apologies for absence were also intimated on behalf of Mrs Jackie Wilson, Church Representative.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

There were no declarations of interest or statements of transparency made.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

(a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 March 2024 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Special Appeal Sub-Committee

The minute of meeting of the Special Appeal Sub-Committee of 20 December 2023, a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX I**).

4. PRESENTATION BY NORTHMUIR PRIMARY SCHOOL 'WE ARE THE HEALTHIEST SCHOOL'

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning welcomed the headteacher and four pupils from Northmuir Primary School who presented their project 'We are The Healthiest School'. The presentation provided members with information as to how the project started, their vision, the big launch and various workshops which had taken place. The project included a health week which allowed pupils to learn through workshops and allowed them to engage and learn new skills by connecting with the community in various different ways, by writing to care homes, creating an Easter Egg and Christmas Tree Trail to encourage people to move during a time when people lacked motivation, participating in the Forfar Park run, linking up with RSNO and Kirrie Connections whilst sharing their story through Community groups like the Rotary, Sports Hub and STV News. The pupils continued to work with their community and would hand the project over to Primary 6 pupils who would continue with the project.

Following questions and comments, the Convener and members of the Committee praised all those involved in the project and thanked the children and Head Teacher for their attendance and informative presentation.

At this stage in the meeting, the Convener intimated that Councillor Speed had submitted an emergency motion outwith the required timeframe. The Convener asked Councillor Speed to clarify her reasons for not complying with Standing Order 24(1) and the reasons why the motion was late.

Councillor Speed advised that the Motion was submitted outwith the required timeframe due to the matter being a live issue and it only being brought to her attention very recently.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to adjourn for 15 minutes to allow the Convener to take advice from Officers.

The meeting resumed at 2.38pm

The Convener referred to Standing Order 24(1) which required that a Motion which does not directly relate to an item of business under consideration of the meeting be given to the Director of Legal, Governance and Change at least 14 days before the meeting and at the same time given also to the Director of Finance should the Motion involve expenditure not provided for, or reduce income provided for in the Capital or Revenue Budgets. The Convener was therefore of the view that the motion was not competent, and the Committee do not consider it as Councillor Speed had not complied with the required timescales as per Standing Order 24(1) and the Director of Finance had not had adequate time to comment.

5. ANGUS ADULT PROTECTION COMMITTEE (AAPC) ANNUAL REPORT PERIOD APRIL 2022 - MARCH 2023

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee of 23 April 2024, there was submitted Report No 117/24 by the Chief Executive presenting the Angus Adult Protection Committee Annual Report for March 2022 to April 2023.

The Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 set up multi-agency Adult Protection Committees (APCs) in every council area. APCs were responsible for monitoring and advising on adult protection procedures and practice, to ensure appropriate co-operation between agencies and for improving the skills and knowledge of those with responsibility for the protection of adults at risk. Chief Officers across Angus individually and collectively have responsibility to ensure that the Angus APC's authority carry out its functions effectively and were recognised by local agencies that the Angus APC had lines of accountability to the Council, NHS Board and Police Scotland.

Mr Ewen West, Independent Chair introduced the AAPC Report for the period April 2022 to March 2023, which presented the work undertaken across Angus by individual agencies and in partnership to deliver national, Tayside-wide, and local adult protection outcomes to improve the lives of adults at risk of harm.

The Report highlighted the ongoing work of multi-agency partners to ensure that vulnerable adults and their carers continued to be well supported as we continue to experience the cost of living crisis and further austerity cuts.

The Care Inspectorate had undertaken a multi-agency Adult Support and Protection Inspection in late 2022 and feedback had been positive. Identified areas of improvement by the Care Inspectorate had been noted in advance by the AAPC multi-agency partners and these had been taken forward through the relevant areas. Since the report had been submitted these improvements had been implemented and signed off by the Care Inspectorate.

Section 5 of the Report also outlined the key trends and areas of development and progression and Mr West advised that the Inspection and Improvement Plan had now been fully implemented.

Having heard a number of members welcome the Report and following questions, the Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the content of the Angus Adult Protection Committee Annual Report 2022 to 2023 as appended to the Report; and
- (ii) to note the Council's cross departmental responsibilities in relation to Adult Protection.

6. ANGUS SCHOOL INSPECTION REPORT

There was submitted Report No 159/24 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning updating members on the recent publication of Education Scotland reports on inspection activity in Angus schools.

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning introduced the Report which provided a summary of the two inspections as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report. These inspections included areas of strength, areas for improvement, evaluations of the Quality Indicators and an expression of confidence in each school's capacity to improve.

Thereafter, the headteachers from Arbroath High School and Ferryden Primary School, answered members' questions.

Having heard the Convener thank the headteachers for their attendance, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the areas of strength identified in each school's inspection;
- (ii) to note the areas for improvement identified in each school's inspection;
- (iii) to note the evaluation of the Quality Indicators in each school's inspection; and
- (iv) to note the expression of confidence for each school's capacity to improve.

7. SUMMARY OF CARE INSPECTORATE INSPECTION OF ANGUS FOSTERING AND ADOPTION SERVICES

There was submitted Report No 160/24 by the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice updating members on the recent Care Inspectorate publication of inspection reports on Angus Council Fostering and Adoption Services.

The Report provided members with information regarding a short notice inspection of Angus Council Fostering and Adoption Services which took place between 26 February and 19 March 2024. The inspection report was completed on 20 March 2024 with both services being awarded a grade 5. It was noted that there were a number of positive areas highlighted in each report, in particular the work of the staff, carer support and the foster and adoption carers. The Care Inspectorate had also acknowledged the significant work undertaken with the kinship carers and the service improvements that had been identified.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the areas of strength identified within the inspection Reports;
- (ii) to note the positive outcomes noted for children in Angus; and
- (iii) to note the evaluation of the Key Questions and Quality Indicators for each service.

8. SUMMARY OF CARE INSPECTORATE INSPECTION OF LOGAN COTTAGES

There was submitted Report No 161/24 by the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice which provided a summary to members of the inspection of Logan Cottages which was completed on 5 March 2024 by the Care Inspectorate.

The Report provided members with information regarding an unannounced inspection of Logan Cottages children's care home, which took place on 27 and 28 February 2024. The inspection report was completed on 5 March 2024 and it was noted that a grade 4 had been awarded.

It was noted that following the inspection Report, the service had developed an action plan to address the area for improvement by 12 April 2024 as directed by the Care Inspectorate.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the areas of strength identified within the inspection reports; and
- (ii) to note the expression of confidence in the service's capacity to improve.

9. UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING YOUNG PEOPLE – SUPPORT AND ALLOWANCES

There was submitted Report No 162/24 by the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice and Chief Social Work Officer which sought an increase in the level of section 29 payments made to unaccompanied young people and further sought agreement for Angus Council to pay the equivalent of Educational Maintenance Allowance to unaccompanied young people accessing further education or training, as part of a learning agreement.

The Report indicated that unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people who were aged over sixteen and lived independently or in supported lodgings were provided with financial support through weekly payments made under Section 29 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Section 29 allowed a young person to request and receive support up to the age of 26. Whilst there was a live application for asylum for a young person, they were not entitled to claim a range of benefits available to other care experienced young people including Educational Maintenance Allowance, Care Experienced Bursary, or other welfare benefits. They also cannot enter paid or unpaid employment.

The Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice and Chief Social Work Officer highlighted that within section 7.1 of the Report the increased costs per annum would be contained within the budget.

The Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice then answered questions from Councillors Greig and Whiteside.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to increase Section 29 payments for unaccompanied young people from the current rate of £79.50 to £100 per week effective immediately noting that additional payments had been made since November 2023 and that no back payment was recommended;
- (ii) to establish a scheme to support attendance in education, learning and training for unaccompanied young people to include a payment of £30 per week as part of a learning agreement;
- (iii) to instruct the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice to implement the above scheme effective from August 2024; and
- (iv) to note that the increased costs for the increase in allowance and implementation of the education scheme would be fully met from grant funding received from the Home Office.

10. CHARGING FOR ADDITIONAL HOURS OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Children and Learning Committee of 23 February 2016, there was submitted Report No 163/24 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning seeking approval to trial the opportunity for parents and carers to pay for an additional session of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to create further flexibility in Local Authority settings.

The Report highlighted that in light of the increased parental demand for payment for additional provision of ELC through the introduction of 1140 hours of delivery, it was proposed that the Committee approve the trial offer of one additional session per child, per week at Forfar or Carnoustie ELC.

If approved, it was proposed that a charge of £30 be made for one five hour session of ELC and that the trial would run from August 2024 until June 2025 with a report on the outcome of the trial being brought back to this Committee in May 2025, at which time the continuation or any further roll out of this provision would be considered.

The Manager, (Early Years), answered a number of questions by members.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to approve the proposal to provide further flexibility in the provision of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Local Authority settings by trialling the option for parents and carers to pay for one additional session of ELC provision per week;
- (ii) to approve the proposal to charge parents and carers £30 for one five-hour session of ELC; and
- (iii) that a further Report on the outcome of the trial would be shared with this Committee in May 2025 at which time the continuation or any further roll out of the provision would be considered.

11. INTERIM PERFORMANCE UPDATE – EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of the Children and Learning Committee of 19 September 2023 there was submitted Report No 164/24 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning which provided a summary of Angus Council performance against the “core stretch measures” identified in the national Framework for Recovery and Accelerating Progress.

The Service Leader – Education and Lifelong Learning introduced the Report which provided members with an update on the 2022/23 performance relating to core stretch and core plus measures which were aligned with the national requirements in the framework for recovery and accelerating progress.

Details of the stretch aims for the 2022-23 reporting year were noted within Appendix 1 of the Report, with Appendix 2 of the Report providing an overview of performance data relating to the Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Levels for literacy and numeracy in P1, 4 and 7. Appendix 3 to the Report provided an overview of performance for the Senior Phase.

The Service Leader – Education and Lifelong Learning responded to questions from Councillor Speed.

The Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the information as detailed in the Report and Appendices 1 to 3 to the Report;
- (ii) to acknowledge the achievements of the children and young people and the support provided by parents, staff and partners; and
- (iii) to request that an annual attainment report be provided for 2023-24 once the relevant data had been published.

12. ANGUS CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND JUSTICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-27

There was submitted Report No 165/24 by the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice which presented the Angus Council Children, Families and Justice (CFJ) Improvement Plan for 2024 – 27. It was noted that this was the first time the CFJ improvement plan had been brought before Committee.

The Manager – Quality, Improve and Review introduced the Report and advised that many actions on the improvements were currently under way across the department. She advised that further work would be undertaken during the first year on refining ambitions within the performance framework and that they aimed to increase or reduce performance targets. It was important to establish stretch aims and work was progressing on this, using national policy such as the next iteration of the Promise Plan 2024 – 2030 and analysis of local performance to include clearly defined stretch aims. These aims would be set out within in the first year report.

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning responded to questions from Councillor Greig.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the Angus Children, Families and Justice Improvement Plan 2024-27, provided in Appendix 1; and
- (ii) to instruct the Interim Director of Children, Families and Justice to report back to a future meeting of this Committee with a yearly update on progress.

13. SCHOOL TERMS AND HOLIDAYS 2025-28 – CONSULTATION OUTCOME

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of the Children and Learning Committee of 14 November 2023, there was submitted Report No 166/24 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning the Report which provided members with details of a consultation exercise with parents and carers, school staff and unions and sought full approval for school holiday dates for 2025/2026, 2026/2027 and 2027/2028.

The Report advised that a total of 837 responses were received to the consultation with 61.3% of respondents agreeing with the proposed dates and 38.7% not agreeing with the proposed dates.

It was noted that where a respondent did not agree with the proposals, an opportunity was provided to give reasons for their response. The themes of the comments and the response of the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate were summarised within section 5 of the Report.

Following comments, the Committee agreed: -

- (i) to note the outcome of the consultation exercise regarding school terms and holiday dates, in which 61.3% of respondents agreed with the proposed dates; and
- (ii) to approve in full the school terms and holiday dates for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 as detailed in the Appendices to the Report.