

Minutes

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00 am, Tuesday, 8 October 2013

Present

Councillors Godzik (Convener), Fullerton (Vice-Convener), Aitken, Aldridge, Austin Hart, Barrie (substituting for Councillor Lewis), Brock, Cardownie, Corbett, Day, Dixon, Howat, Jackson, Keil (substituting for Councillor Child), Lunn, Main, Milligan, Mowat (substituting for Councillor Nick Cook), Redpath, Rust and Work (substituting for Councillor Key).

Also present for Education items

Marie Allan, Allan Crosbie, Craig Duncan and Lindsay Law.

1. Minute

Decision

To approve the minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee of 21 May 2013 as a correct record.

2. Education, Children and Families Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan – December 2013 to March 2014

The Education, Children and Families Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan for the period December 2013 to March 2014 was presented.

Decision

To note the Key Decisions Forward Plan for December 2013 to March 2014.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

3. Education, Children and Families Committee Business Bulletin

The Education, Children and Families Committee Business Bulletin for 8 October 2013 was presented.

Decision

To note the Business Bulletin.

(References – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

4. Vision for Schools

The main findings from the consultation on the Vision for Schools, carried out between January and June 2013, were presented. Approval was sought for an action plan to take the Vision forward.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the Director's report.
- 2) To approve the Action Plan as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.
- 3) To request a further report in March 2014.
- 4) To thank the officers for the work done on the Vision.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

5. Primary School Estate Rising Rolls

Details were provided of the accommodation pressures facing ten city primary schools for August 2014, and in some cases future years. For those primary schools potentially requiring additional accommodation for August 2014, a proposed method of delivering this in time for the start of the 2014/15 session was outlined.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the Director's report;
- 2) To approve that new accommodation be provided at the following primary schools, subject to a final decision regarding the necessity for such provision, delegated to the Director of Children and Families, being taken in January 2014 (or earlier if appropriate) upon assessment of pupil registration figures:
 - Balgreen Primary School
 - Broughton Primary School
 - Craigour Park Primary School
 - Flora Stevenson's Primary School
 - Fox Covert Primary School
 - Liberton Primary School
 - St David's RC Primary School
 - Stockbridge Primary School
 - Victoria Primary School

- 3) To delegate authority to the Director of Children and Families to:
 - (a) agree, including where alternative options exist for the delivery of new accommodation (e.g. between new build or extension or where there were different phasing options), what the most appropriate solution would be taking into consideration factors such as cost, deliverability and impact on the school;
 - (b) approve the final costs of the preferred options whilst always ensuring that value for money was achieved.
- 4) To thank the officers for the engagement with schools, parents and parent councils.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

6. Improving Support for Children and Young People in Need in Edinburgh – Consultation on a Proposal to Close Wellington Special School in Midlothian

Approval was sought to commence a consultation process on a proposal to close Wellington Special School in Midlothian, and replace the services currently provided there with enhanced services in the city of Edinburgh.

Decision

- 1) To approve that the statutory consultation was carried on the proposed closure of education services at Wellington Special School with a view to ending care and education services at Wellington by 30 June 2014 as set out in the Director's report.
- 2) To delegate authority to the Director of Children and Families to develop a detailed consultation paper on the basis of the proposals outlined in the report.
- 3) To approve that the statutory consultation should commence in November 2013.
- 4) To note that it was the intention to return to a future meeting of the Full Council for a decision on the proposal.
- 5) To note that the proposal would require Scottish Ministers approval prior to implementation should the Council decide to proceed.
- 6) To note the intention to request consent from the Council to ring fence some or all of any capital receipts for future education and care provision within the city of Edinburgh.
- 7) To approve the proposals for the development of additional pupil support services in the city of Edinburgh.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

7. Parental Engagement

An update was provided on the Parental Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. An overview of the first year of work of the Neighbourhood and City Wide Special Schools parent groups and the revamped Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP) was detailed.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the Director's report.
- 2) To agree the Parental Engagement strategy document and implementation plan and request a progress report on implementation in October 2014.
- 3) To note the increased representation of parents at Neighbourhood Groups and the CCWP during the 2012/13 session.
- 4) To thank the officers for their work in taking the strategy forward.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

8. Outdoor Play and Active Learning

An update was provided on progress made in outdoor play and active learning.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress made in developing school grounds for outdoor play and active learning.
- 2) To note the success of schools in attracting funding to improve their grounds for play.
- 3) To request a review of policy for the community use of school grounds for play outside teaching hours.
- 4) To note the success and national recognition of the OPAL Waterplay project in 40 Early Years settings.
- 5) To note a commitment to the inclusion of outdoor play and active learning through the design of school grounds when planning for new schools.
- 6) To note the expansion of Forest Education and Forest School provision in the city.
- 7) To note the appointment of a Play Champion and the establishment of a Play Forum.
- 8) To accept a report on a new City of Edinburgh Play Strategy in May 2014 in response to national and international guidance.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

9. Co-operative Childcare and Education

An update was provided on progress in developing co-operative childcare and co-operative education and learning in Edinburgh.

Decision

- 1) To note that one After School Care club had made a formal application to the Co-operative Enterprise Hub, to take the next step to become a co-operative.
- 2) To note that there was significant scope to develop formal co-operative support and practices amongst clubs.
- 3) To note the formation of a steering group to monitor the development of childcare co-operatives and associated activity to support the out of school and playgroup sectors.
- 4) To note the conference to be organised by Lothian Association of Youth Clubs, and the Co-operative Learning and Education event.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

10. Integrated Literacy Strategy Early Years

An overview was provided of progress with Early Years priorities within the Integrated Literacy Strategy Action Plan for 2012/13.

Decision

- 1) To note the continued progress with Early Years priorities within the Edinburgh Integrated Literacy Strategy Action Plan 2012/13.
- 2) To request that officers continued to assess and evaluate the use and effectiveness of the Pre 5 Literacy Assessment and Planning Tracker, including a survey of staff and parents, and report back within 12 months.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

11. Preventing and Responding to Bullying and Prejudice in City of Edinburgh Council Schools

An update was provided on further work to reduce bullying and prejudice in Edinburgh schools, and approval was sought for some changes to the Council's policy and procedures.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the Director's report.
- 2) To approve the revised policy and procedures and note these would be revised in line with the policy hierarchy agreed by the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 3 September 2013.

- 3) To request a further report in April 2015 in line with Council-wide Equalities reporting.
- 4) To refer the report to the Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP) and Neighbourhood Parent Groups.
- 5) To thank the officers for their hard work.

(References – minute of the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee 3 September 2013 (item 4); report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

12. Special Schools – Proposals for the Future Development of Panmure St Ann's

The Committee had previously considered a report providing an overview of proposed future developments of Panmure St Ann's. An update was provided on progress with these developments and details were given of the next steps in the process.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress to date on the transition of the Panmure St Ann's Service into a school offering young people full curricular entitlement.
- 2) To recognise the hard work and dedication of the staff at Panmure St Ann's and thank them for their continued efforts on behalf of the young people at the school.
- 3) To request that there was continued engagement with all staff about the school's improvement.
- 4) To request that an update report be prepared for March 2014.

(References –minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 9 October 2012 (item13); report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

13. Annual Review of Services for Children and Young People who are Looked After and Accommodated by the City of Edinburgh Council

An overview was provided of service provision for children looked after and accommodated by the Council, together with details of a range of associated service area improvement plans.

Decision

- 1) To note the positive progress made on services for looked after and accommodated children.
- 2) To note the service strategy and improvement plans for looked after and accommodated children and young people.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Keil declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as a Board Member of the Dean and Cauvin Trust.

14. Social Work Services for Children with Disabilities – Annual Progress Report

Details were presented of progress on social work services for children with disabilities.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress made within social work services for children with disabilities.
- 2) To request a further report on progress in September 2014.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

15. Improving Positive Destinations – Follow Up 2011/12

Progress towards improving school leaver destinations based on the follow up census carried out by Skills Development Scotland in March 2013 was presented.

The follow-up data showed 89.8% of young people were in a positive destination in March 2013 compared with 88.3% at the initial census in September 2012; an increase of 1.5%. For the first time, Edinburgh had overtaken the national average by 0.3%.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the Director's report and the improvement and trends in positive destinations.
- 2) To note the progress of strategies in school and post school.
- 3) To agree to receive a further report in January 2014 following the publication of the School Leaver Destination census data for the 2012/13 school leaver cohort.

(References –minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 5 March 2013 (item 11); report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

16. Schools Energy Report

An update was provided on school energy consumption for 2012/13, together with an action plan of further planned work to improve the energy efficiency of the school estate.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the Director's report, the significant data gathering, audit and analysis work to date and the proposed action plan to identify and deliver agreed targets.
- 2) That an annual report was submitted to the Committee on progress made against the agreed action plan.

- 3) That an interim report was submitted to the Committee in six months on the progress and outcomes of the Awareness and Good Housekeeping campaign pilot.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 5 March 2013 (item 10); report by the Director of Services for Communities, submitted.)

17. Children and Families Standards and Quality Report 2013

Details were presented of the Children and Families Standards and Quality Report 2013 and a summary provided of progress towards the expected outcomes set out in the Children and Families Service Plan 2012-15.

Decision

- 1) To note the improved and maintained performance during the reporting period.
- 2) To note the areas identified for further improvement.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

18. Children and Families Department Revenue Budget Monitoring 2013-14 – Month Two Position to 31 May 2013

The two month revenue monitoring position to 31 May 2013 was presented for the Children and Families Department.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the Director's report, including the current projected residual budget pressures of £1.8m.
- 2) To note the additional proposals being considered to address residual pressure and enable delivery of a balanced budget.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

19. Response to Consultation – Amending the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Decision

To note the response to the Scottish Government's Amending the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 consultation, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Director's report, which was submitted by the Director of Children and Families on 2 September 2013 to meet the Scottish Government submission deadline.

(Reference – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)

20. Religious Observance in Non-Denominational Schools – referral report from the Petitions Committee

20.1 Deputation Request

Decision

To note that the deputation request from the Edinburgh Secular Society had been withdrawn.

20.2 Referral report from the Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee on 3 June 2013 considered a report by the Director of Corporate Governance outlining 2 petitions: (i) 'Remove Religious Observance from Non-Denominational Schools' and (ii) 'Retain Religious Observance in Non-Denominational Schools'

The Petitions Committee had agreed:

- 1) To refer the Petitions to the Education, Children and Families Committee.
- 2) To ask the Director of Children and Families to provide further information on:
 - i) the estimated cost of holding a referendum.
 - ii) the current position for religious observance in schools in Edinburgh.
 - iii) what constitutes religious observance.
 - iv) details of the training that Head Teachers were provided on religious observance.
 - v) details of the organisations that visit schools in relation to religious observance and what activities they provide.
 - vi) details of further discussions with both sets of petitioners, the deputation and other interested groups.

Decision

- 1) To approve the recommendations of the Petitions Committee.
- 2) To request that the Director of Children and Families report to a future meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee.

(Reference – report by the Head of Legal, Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Howat declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as a member of the Edinburgh Secular Society.

21. Summer Schools Maintenance Report – Update – referral report from the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee had considered an internal audit report on actions for remedy of the summer schools maintenance programme. The report was referred to the Education, Children and Families Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

(Reference – report by the Head of Legal, Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

22. Looked After Children: Transformation Programme – referral report from the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee had considered a report on the Looked after Children Transformation Programme and the initiatives developed to shift the balance of care towards more preventative and less costly services with a view to delivering financial savings. The report was referred to the Education, Children and Families Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

(Reference – report by the Head of Legal, Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

23. Social Work Complaints Review Committees

23.1 27 June 2013

The recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee held on 27 June 2013 on a complaint against the Children and Families Department were detailed, together with the actions taken by the Chief Social Worker in response to the decision taken by the Review Committee.

Decision

To approve the recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee and to note the actions taken by the Chief Social Worker in response to the Review Committee decision.

(References – reports by the Chair of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee and the Chief Social Worker, submitted.)

23.2 7 August 2013

The recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee held on 7 August 2013 on a complaint against the Children and Families Department were detailed.

Decision

To approve the recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee

(Reference – report by the Chair of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee, submitted.)

23.3 14 August 2013

The recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee held on 14 August 2013 on a complaint against the Children and Families Department were detailed.

Decision

To approve the recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee

(Reference – report by the Chair of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee, submitted.)

24. 2015 Examination Diet – Motion by Allan Crosbie

The following motion by Allan Crosbie, seconded by Councillor Godzik, was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16.1:

“The Committee notes that, for the 2015 examination diet, the Scottish Qualifications Authority will set examination papers for both the ‘old’ Highers and the New Qualification Highers, and instructs officers to investigate and report, at the meeting in December 2013 of the Education, Children and Families Committee, on:

1. concerns, if any, that different Secondary School subject departments may have regarding the implementation of the new Higher courses which are due to start in June 2014;
2. a full range of possible solutions to meet those concerns;
3. recommendations to ensure S5 and S6 pupils in Edinburgh have the best range of options across all subjects in session 2014-15.”

Decision

To approve the motion by Allan Crosbie.

25. Sciennes Primary School Playground – Motion by Councillor Burgess

The following motion by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Main, was submitted in terms of Standing Order 29.1:

“Committee;

Welcomes the work by Sciennes Primary Playground Group, including parents and teachers, to improve the school playground;

Notes that the existing playground provides 2.9 square metres for each child, compared to education guidelines recommending 7 square metres;

Notes that the Sciennes Playground Group have explored a range of options and have concluded that extending the playground into the roadway in front of the school is likely to be the most achievable option;

Notes that CEC Transport have advised: that in principle they could consider this use of the roadway subject to approval of a design, that traffic surveys would have to be undertaken and a Stopping Up or Redetermination Order for the road would need to be secured;

Therefore calls for a report on increasing the size of the school playground, and in particular using the road space in front of the school, and what steps would be necessary to achieve this.”

Decision

To approve the following motion, as adjusted:

“Committee:

- 1) Welcomes the work by Sciennes Primary Playground Group, including parents and teachers, to improve the school playground;
- 2) Notes that the Sciennes Playground Group have explored a range of options and have concluded that extending the playground into the roadway in front of the school is likely to be the most achievable option;
- 3) Notes that the Transport and Environment Committee has agreed via the local transport strategy to seek views on pilot school streets which would limit or prohibit vehicular traffic with a view to ensuring the safe passage of children to and from school;
- 4) Notes the good progress on Outdoor Play and Active Learning across the schools estate as outlined in the report at 7.5 on the agenda for this meeting (minute item 8 above), and especially the success in securing external funding and the efforts of parents in contributing to improved play space;
- 5) Commends Sciennes Primary Playground Group for their work so far and for their commitment to future fundraising to take forward such a project, and notes that at this point there is currently no funding in the Children and Families Capital Investment Programme for such a project nor does the Department have any surplus capital funding which is not already committed against other projects;
- 6) Notes that a meeting between relevant Transport & Environment officers; Children & Families officers; and ward Councillors will be arranged to discuss this matter, to look at the outline designs from parents, and request that Corporate Property investigate indicative costings;
- 7) Further notes that outdoor play space will be considered as part of the Education Children & Families Departments updated Asset Management Plan, which is set to be presented to Committee in 2014.”

26. Childrens Eye Tests – Motion by Councillor Main

The following motion by Councillor Main, seconded by Councillor Corbett, was submitted in terms of Standing Order 16.1:

“This Committee notes that:

The Scottish Government’s Working Group on Childrens’ Services stated ‘Vision is required to access information, to interact socially and to move around. Impaired vision in childhood can limit development in each of these areas, and can lead to long term educational and social disadvantage unless appropriate provisions are made from an early age.’

Children’s eyes should be tested at various points in their development, including before they start school.

Although the NHS recommends that adults and children should have their eyes tested every 2 years, parents and carers are often unaware that their children should have full eye tests.

Children very often learn to compensate for and disguise sight problems from their peers and adults, which can make detection of easily corrected problems difficult. Problems with sight are often not picked up until and unless a child becomes disruptive in class, and other agencies are involved.

The NHS 27 month check of all children, which included an eye test, was abolished in 2005 and a new test 30 Month child test was reinstated earlier in 2013 but does not include a full eye test.

Notes that Early Years Department and the NHS work together to ensure that preschool children across the city are invited for a test prior to starting school.

And agrees that a report be brought to the committee, within 2 cycles;

outlining the current situation for Edinburgh’s school children, including when children have had and will receive eye tests and whether there are any children who have not had full eye tests prior to starting school;

making recommendations necessary to ensure that parents are aware what eye tests a child should have and that they are free at the point of delivery and to ensure that all Edinburgh’s children receive preschool and bi-annual eye tests.”

Decision

To approve the following motion, as adjusted:

“Committee notes that:

- The Scottish Government’s Working Group on Childrens’ Services stated ‘Vision is required to access information, to interact socially and to move around. Impaired vision in childhood can limit development in each of these areas, and can lead to long term educational and social disadvantage unless appropriate provisions are made from an early age.

- Children’s eyes should be tested at various points in their development, including before they start school.
- Although the NHS recommends that adults and children should have their eyes tested every 2 years, parents and carers are often unaware that their children should have full eye tests.
- Children very often learn to compensate for and disguise sight problems from their peers and adults, which can make detection of easily corrected problems difficult. Problems with sight are often not picked up until and unless a child becomes disruptive in class, and other agencies are involved.
- The NHS 27 month check of all children, which included an eye test, was abolished in 2005 and a new test 30 Month child test was reinstated earlier in 2013 but does not include a full eye test.
- Notes that Early Years Department and the NHS work together to ensure that preschool children across the city are invited for a test prior to starting school.

Committee therefore requests that the Director of Children and Families highlight this issue with NHS Lothian, through the Children’s Partnership, and inform Committee members of any action proposed by the NHS to maximise the uptake of eye tests, as well as any further actions by the Council which could support this aim.”