

Minutes

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00 am, Tuesday, 8 December 2015

Present

Councillors Godzik (Convener), Fullerton (Vice-Convener), Aitken, Aldridge, Bridgman, Child, Corbett, Day, Jackson, Keil (substituting for Councillor Austin Hart), Key, Lewis, Lunn, Main, Milligan, Redpath, Robson, Rust and Tymkewycz.

Added members for Education matters

Marie Allan, Alexander Ramage and John Swinburne.

1. Order of business

The Convener agreed that the items of business be dealt with in the following order.

2. Deputation

The Committee agreed to hear a deputation from Craig Allan, Principal Petitioner, in regard to the Reverse the 'Reserve Places' for Incoming Catchment Children in Primary 1 Policy Petition, which had been referred to this Committee for consideration by the Petitions Committee.

The deputation advised that he had applied, and had been placed on the waiting list, for his child to attend a local primary school outside of catchment. In previous years reserve places for incoming catchment pupils would have been released upon the start of the school term. However, due to a new policy, this was the first year this had not happened. He argued that this change had not been effectively publicised, and therefore requested that the rule be reversed and a further formal consultation exercise be undertaken.

The Convener thanked the deputation for his presentation and invited him to remain for the Committee's consideration of the related reports at items 3, 4 and 5 below.

3. Short-Life Working Group: School Admissions/Appeals

An update on the work and findings of the short-life Member Officer Working Group, established to review the school admissions and appeals process, was submitted. A

number of recommendations to address issues that had arisen in recent years and to improve the process for all participants were outlined.

Decision

- 1) To note the formation of an appropriately qualified, dedicated small team to present the case on behalf of the Council for all appeals to the Independent Appeal Committee.
- 2) To note the progress made to date in improving the quality of information on the admissions and appeals process available on the Council website and that further work would be undertaken to improve the quality of public information to ensure that all relevant policies and procedures could be easily accessed.
- 3) To note that an Admissions and Appeals report would be submitted to Committee on an annual basis.
- 4) To note that a separate report on the agenda for this Committee on a revised Admissions policy (see item 4 below) would support the ongoing work of improving the placing in schools and appeals process.
- 5) To note the principle behind 'Reserved Places' as outlined in the Admissions policy and to ensure that this was promoted to parents and all involved in the placing process through appropriate communications on a regular basis.
- 6) To note that a formalised open recruitment and selection process would be carried out and reviewed annually (if required) to increase the number of both panel members and chairs on the independent panel.
- 7) To note the development and delivery of an annual mandatory training programme for panel chairs/members and all officers, including head teachers, who were involved in the Appeals process. Consideration would be given to the use of an external training provider where appropriate e.g. for panel members and chairs.
- 8) To request a further progress report in March 2016 on progress in relation to the above recommendations.
- 9) To recommend that the Independent Appeals Panel consider:
 - 9.1) Whether it was practical for the panel to provide more detailed written reasons for their decisions in order that these reasons could be communicated via Committee Services to the parent/carer and Committee.
 - 9.2) Developing a formal and enhanced feedback and evaluation process to ensure that Independent Appeal Panel members receive feedback from all stakeholders.

- 10) To continue with the short-life Working Group to oversee the delivery of the action plan.
- 11) To thank the officers involved in the short-life Working Group for their hard work to date.

(References – minute of the Education Children and Families Committee 6 October 2015 (item 23); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

Declaration of Interests

Alexander Ramage declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as his partner was a panel member for the Placing in School Appeals Committee.

4. Admissions to Mainstream Schools

Approval was sought for a new Admissions Policy for all mainstream schools. The purpose of the policy was to ensure clarity and consistency in the management of admissions to mainstream schools at all stages, and had been informed by class size legislation and existing national agreements.

Decision

- 1) To confirm approval of the Admissions to Mainstream Schools Policy.
- 2) To refer the policy to the short-life Working Group for consideration of how to make it more accessible to users.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 6 October 2015 (item 23); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

Declaration of Interests

Alexander Ramage declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as his partner was a panel member for the Placing in School Appeals Committee.

5. Reverse the 'Reserve places' for Incoming Catchment Children in Primary 1 Policy – referral from the Petitions Committee

The Petitions Committee on 5 November 2015 considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive outlining the petition "Reverse the 'Reserve places' for incoming catchment children in Primary 1 policy". The Committee had agreed to refer the petition to the Education, Children and Families Committee for consideration.

Decision

To note the referral from the Petitions Committee.

(References – minute of the Petitions Committee 5 November 2015 (item 4a); report by the Head of Legal and Risk, submitted.)

Declaration of Interests

Alexander Ramage declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as his partner was a panel member for the Placing in School Appeals Committee.

Councillor Key declared a non-financial interest in the foregoing item as a member of the Petitions Committee.

6. Minutes

Decision

To approve the minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee of 19 May 2015 as a correct record, subject to noting that the Edinburgh Youth Issues Forum had been replaced by the Young Edinburgh Action Forum and would be removed from the list of appointed working groups.

7. Education, Children and Families Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan – March to May 2016

The Education, Children and Families Committee Key Decisions Forward Plan for the period March to May 2016 was presented.

Decision

To note the Key Decisions Forward Plan for March to May 2016.

(Reference – Key Decisions Forward Plan – March to May 2016, submitted.)

8. Education, Children and Families Committee Rolling Actions Log – December 2015

The Education, Children and Families Committee Rolling Actions Log for December 2015 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To approve the closure of actions 6 (part 2), 8, 15, 26 and 28.
- 2) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference – Rolling Actions Log – 8 December 2015, submitted.)

9. Education, Children and Families Committee Business Bulletin

The Education, Children and Families Committee Business Bulletin for 8 December 2015 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To note the Business Bulletin.
- 2) To congratulate staff involved in the Defibrillator Project.

(Reference – Business Bulletin – 8 December 2015, submitted.)

10. Rising School Rolls

An update was provided on the primary school rising rolls programme including the latest forecast for future city-wide primary school rolls. Initial work carried out to assess the impact of rising rolls in the secondary sector where, from 2017 onwards, rolls were projected to start rising again, following a period of decline, and further identified actions to be progressed during 2016, were also detailed.

Decision

- 1) To note the content of the report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families and the intention to bring a further report to Committee on 1 March 2016 to confirm the primary schools which had been identified as potentially facing accommodation pressures from August 2017.
- 2) To note the solutions which had been developed for seven primary schools (Balgreen, East Craigs, Fox Covert, St Mary's RC (Leith), Ferryhill, Granton and Roseburn) to address potential accommodation pressures at these schools which, if required could be delivered by August 2016.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 19 May 2015 (item 15); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

11. Children and Families Asset Management Plan 2014 - Update

An update was provided on the delivery of the Children and Families Asset Management Action Plan, including details of progress on the review of primary school capacities.

Decision

To note the update on the action plan as detailed in the report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 19 May 2015 (item 14); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

12. Additional Support Needs Planning and Performance Update 2015

An overview of planning and performance for service provision for children and young people with additional support needs in Edinburgh, including priorities for 2016-19, was provided. A twin strategy of investment and measures to secure improvements in quality and performance had been adopted to reflect growing demand.

Decision

- 1) To note the continuing progress to improve outcomes closing the literacy gap for learners in the lowest 20%.
- 2) To note the scale and complexity of demographic challenges and the continuing trend in the growth in additional support needs in Edinburgh.
- 3) To note the continuing progress in service improvement, in particular child planning and the autism planning tool and the partnership with children, parents and staff embodied in this approach.
- 4) To note the sustained progress in the support for children requiring additional support for social, emotional and behavioural needs in the early years and primary through the case management approach.
- 5) To note progress in the strategic development of provision for Additional Support Needs provision to address current and future needs and improve performance.
- 6) To note the success of provisions made to address demographic pressures.
- 7) Approves the priorities and next steps set out in the report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families.

(Reference – report by the Executive Director of Communities 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 and young people looked after and accommodated by the Council, including service area improvement plans for the financial year 2015/16 and beyond.

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.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 11 September 2014 (item 7); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted)

Declaration of Interests

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

14. Children and Families Grants to Third Parties 2016-19

Decision

To note that the report had been withdrawn from the agenda by the Executive Director of Communities and Families.

15. Children and Families Revenue Budget Monitoring 2015/16 – Half Year Position.

The half year revenue budget monitoring position for the Children and Families Directorate was outlined. Significant service pressures totalling £11.1m, inclusive of a contribution of £2.025m towards Health and Social Care financial pressures, continued to be managed. A net residual budget pressure of £1.7m remained for which further mitigating action would still require to be developed.

Decision

- 1) To note the net residual budget pressure of £1.7m which remained at month six.
- 2) To note that approved savings in 2015/16 total £14.075m; the savings programme being closely monitored with action having been taken to address any highlighted risks of non delivery.
- 3) To note that the reported position included a contribution of £2.025m towards pressures within Health & Social Care.
- 4) To note that achieving a balanced position for the year is subject to the development of further mitigating actions of £1.7m.
- 5) To note that whilst all opportunities for further mitigating action would be explored, at the current stage in the financial year there was a significant risk of over-spend.

(References – minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee 6 October 2015 (item 32); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

16. Corporate Performance Framework – Performance to September 2015

An update was provided on Council performance against Children and Families strategic outcomes, covering the period to September 2015.

The update was presented in line with the Council's revised Performance Framework which had been approved by the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee in June 2015.

Decision

To note the performance for the period to September 2015.

(References – minutes of the Education, Children and Families Committee 19 May 2015 (item 24) and Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee 9 June 2015 (item 7); report by the Executive Director of Communities and Families, submitted.)

17. Cameron House Community Centre – Update on Resolving Ongoing Issues with the Building

As requested by the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee, an update was provided on how ongoing issues with Cameron House Community Centre Building were being resolved. The report summarised works undertaken since March 2015, and those scheduled to be completed by early January 2016.

Decision

- 1) To note the works undertaken, since March 2015, to address ongoing issues with the building.
- 2) To note that works had been scheduled to replace floor coverings in the corridor.

(References – minute of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 5 March 2015 (item 1); report by the Acting Director of Services for Communities, submitted.)

18. Governance Arrangements and Council Support to Community Centre Management Committees

The Governance Risk and Best Value Committee on 12 November 2015 considered a report detailing the arrangements for, and Council support to, Community Centre Management Committees. The report was previously considered by the Education,

Children and Families Committee following a request by the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee that information be provided on the issue.

The report had been referred back to the Education, Children and Families Committee with a recommendation that a partnership agreement be established for relations between the Council and community centre management committees.

Decision

- 1) To note that as part of the Asset Management workstream included within the Council's transformational change programme the future governance of community centres and possibilities including community asset transfer were being considered.
- 2) To agree that as this work was brought forward, guidance materials should be produced to support Management Committees of Community Centres to continue to operate in an effective manner and to be clear about where support could be provided if/when issues emerge. This should include contact details of service areas responsible for the different supports required.
- 3) To approve that training requirements for Community Centre Management Committees should also be assessed annually, taking into account new members and the new requirements that any change in governance arrangements would entail.
- 4) To include a section on the management of community centres in the annual Community Learning and Development report.

(References – minutes of the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee 12 November 2015 (item 1 (b)) and the Education, Children and Families Committee 8 October 2015 (item 33); report by the Head of Legal and Risk, submitted.)

19. Social Work Complaints Review Committee – 25 November 2015

The recommendations of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee (SWCRC) held on 25 November to consider a complaint against the Children and Families Directorate were detailed. The SWCRC had upheld the complaint for the following reasons:

- 1) The SWCRC felt that the complainant had not been given any advice about kinship caring, and consequently may have been left financially worse off. The SWCRC did not have the financial information from either side to be able to determine this conclusively. It was felt that if it was demonstrated that the complainant had suffered financially, the Council should consider an appropriate ex-gratia payment.

- 2) The SWCRC noted that in the time since the complainant was caring for her granddaughter, arrangements for kinship caring had been significantly improved, which should ensure that this did not happen again.

The Children and Families response to the decision taken by the SWCRC was outlined. The Education, Children and Families Committee was advised that due to the proximity in time of the SWCRC and this meeting, senior managers had not had sufficient time to consider the recommendations. The Committee was asked to note the report and that a further report would be brought to the next meeting.

Decision

To note the reports from the SWCRC and the Executive Director of Communities and Families and that a further report would be brought back to the next Committee.

(References – reports by the Chair of the Social Work Complaints Review Committee and the Executive Director of Communities and Families, both submitted.)