

Minutes

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday 2 March 2021

Present:

Councillors Perry (Convener), Dickie (Vice-Convener), Bird, Burgess, Douglas, Griffiths, Key, Laidlaw, Mary Campbell, Rust and Louise Young.

Religious Representatives

Fiona Beveridge, Therese Laing and Rabbi David Rose.

Parent Representative

Alexander Ramage

1. Minute

Decision

To approve the minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee of 15 December 2021 as a correct record.

2. School Roll Projections and Rising School Rolls

A report on the latest school roll projections and the suggested actions needed for individual schools moving forward was presented to Committee. The delay in publication from December 2020 was noted to be a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had also delayed the release of CityPlan 2030, meaning it was not possible to include commentary on the impact of the Plan on pupil generation from new housing sites.

Members were presented with an analysis of the updated school roll projections together with proposed next steps needed to tackle rising rolls. This included 'Live' projects, further analysis from Learning Estate Planning Officers and scrutiny of P1 and S1 registration numbers.

During consideration of the matter, Members also took into account the points raised in the written deputation which had been submitted by James Gillespie's High School Parent Council.

Councillor Watt was heard on the matter as a local Ward Member and expressed support for the issues raised in the written deputation from the Parent Council.

Decision

- 1) To note the intention to progress the actions arising from School Roll projections set out in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.
- 2) To provide a written response to James Gillespie's High School Parent Council to the points raised in their deputation.
- 3) To ask the Head Teachers of James Gillespie's High School and Boroughmuir High School to consider exploring physical consortia of in-classroom teaching of advanced higher subjects.
- 4) To explore additional classroom accommodation solutions for James Gillespie's High School in consultation with the Head Teacher, and to circulate a briefing note to Committee members and relevant local Ward Members on any viable options identified including information on delivery timescales and any associated planning or regulatory issues.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning, submitted).

3. Work Programme

The Committee's Work Programme updated to March 2021 was presented.

Decision

To note the Work Programme.

(Reference – Work Programme 2 March 2021, submitted)

4. Rolling Actions Log

The Rolling Actions Log for March 2021 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To agree to close the following actions:
 - Action 3 – Raising Attainment Frameworks for Learning: Teaching and Learning.
 - Action 5 – Delivery of the New Boroughmuir High School – Post Project Review.
 - Action 6 – Energy in Schools Annual Report
 - Action 16 – Edinburgh Learns Inclusion Annual Report
 - Action 25 (2) – Schools Reopening Update
 - Action 29 – Motion by Councillor Burgess – Outdoor Learning
 - Action 35 – Corporate Parenting Action Plan

- Action 38 – Motion by Councillor Laidlaw – Funding of the Flu Vaccine by Headteachers for Staff
- 2) Action 37 – To amend ‘Level 4’ to ‘Level3’ and include a note to arrange a meeting to discuss the return of school sports prior to the Easter Holiday break. Parents would be informed of the outcome of this discussion.
 - 3) Action 30 – To amend to reflect that a special meeting of the Committee has been arranged for Friday 23 April 2021 to consider the outcome of the GME consultation.
 - 4) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.
- (Reference - Rolling Actions Log – 2 March 2021, submitted)

5. Business Bulletin

The Business Bulletin for March 2021 was presented.

Decision

To note the Business Bulletin.

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted)

6. Equalities – Investigation into Allegations of Racism

In June 2020 a range of allegations had been made that a culture of racism existed within certain schools in the city. An investigation spanning three months from June to August 2020 was launched into each allegation by interviewing those involved and examining records.

The investigation was overseen by an independent adviser and with recourse to specialist legal advice. The majority of the investigation centred on two schools, St Augustine’s RC High and Holy Rood RC High but also included Craigmount High, Drummond High and Firrhill High.

Although there was no evidence that a culture of racism existed, there were learning and development needs for certain schools and for the authority overall.

During consideration of the matter, Members also took account of the points raised in the written deputation which had been submitted by Intercultural Youth Scotland.

Decision

- 1) To thank the young people who brought these allegations to light and for sharing their personal accounts and recollections enabling the investigation to take place.
- 2) To thank the staff who supported the investigation process.
- 3) To note the overall conclusion that a culture of racism did not exist within the schools investigated.

- 4) To note, however, that important improvements were required for;
 - a. Setting out clear processes to report racist incidents;
 - b. Managing racist incidents sensitively and ensuring follow up actions were taken;
 - c. Reviewing the curriculum to ensure it did not perpetuate and actively challenge racist or colonialist attitudes;
 - d. To further note that these improvements were in motion and appeared in the Equalities Action Plan previously brought before this Committee.
- 5) To ask for a follow up report to every Committee meeting until further notice to allow members to monitor and evaluate specific actions.
- 6) To ask that future reports address incidents of racism separately from curriculum review and development work.
- 7) To note that management actions would be reported back to Committee if required.
- 8) To circulate a briefing note to members providing information on teaching materials provided for religious and moral education, what was mandatory in terms of the national curriculum, any discretions which could be applied by local education authorities and any subsequent discretions that could be applied by individual headteachers.
- 9) To record the Committee's thanks and appreciation to all the young people, staff and the Independent Enquiries and Education Specialist for enabling and supporting the investigation process.

(Reference – Report by the Chief Executive, submitted).

7. Lifelong Learning Plan

Decision

To note that this report had been deferred to the next meeting of the Committee scheduled to be held on 18 May 2021.

8. Attainment in the Broad General Education 2019-2020 (with 2020-2021 update)

Committee were presented with a summary of the analysis of attainment in the Broad General Education (BGE) for City of Edinburgh's Schools for the year 2019-2020.

Members noted that, based on the data available, there were signs of a decrease in attainment in literacy and numeracy. This was most likely due to the impact of school closures. The decrease seemed to be most significant in schools with catchment areas

which included areas of higher deprivation and schools with high numbers of pupils with English as an additional language.

Members also received an update on the attainment figures for the current 2020-2021 year. It was noted that drops in attainment were similar at the time of paper publication when compared to the 2019-2020 figures.

Proposed future actions were presented to members, which were to be deployed to strengthen school attainment.

Decision

- 1) To note the update regarding the position in educational attainment in Edinburgh schools within the Broad General Education for session 2019-2020 and the update regarding the current session.
- 2) To note the wide range of strategies that had been deployed to support schools to support pupil attainment and the proposed future actions.
- 3) To agree to receive further annual reports on attainment/improvements in performance.
- 4) To note the hard work of pupils, staff and parents/carers to support the successful delivery of the Broad General Education as part of the Curriculum for Excellence in particular during lockdowns caused by Covid-19.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning, Communities and Families, submitted).

9. Child Protection – Response to Motion

The Council, on 15 October 2020, had approved a motion by Councillor Dickie relating to child protection in the City of Edinburgh.

In response to the motion, information was submitted on public information and awareness, learning and development and whistleblowing.

The report reflected the ongoing work across the city to ensure robust multi-agency child protection procedures were in place. The Child Protection Committee and Chief Officers' Group continued to have oversight and monitored closely any changes in patterns or developments through robust reporting arrangements.

Members noted that any whistleblowing outcomes relating to child protection would be submitted to the Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee in the first instance and then to this Committee.

Decision

- 1) To note the contents of the report.
- 2) To note the positive contribution of services across the City in keeping children safe.

- 3) To note the plan for an Internal Audit regarding whistleblowing outcomes including those relating to child protection issues.
- 4) To note that this report would also be presented to Full Council for information on 29 April 2021.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 15 December 2020 (item 12); Act of Council No 9 of 4 February 2021; Report by the Chief Executive, submitted)

10. Distribution of Scottish Government Community Mental Health Funds

Committee were presented with a report that detailed how the City of Edinburgh Council proposed to distribute the Scottish Government Community Mental Health Funds allocated for the financial year 2020/21 (£335,000).

The report informed members of the action taken under the Committee's urgency provisions by the Head of Children's Services in consultation with the Convener, to award the full amount to Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council (EVOC) for distribution to voluntary and third sector organisations.

Decision

To note the action taken to award the grant funding to EVOC for distribution to voluntary and third sector organisation under the Urgency Procedure paragraph 4.1 of the Committee Terms of Reference and Delegated Functions.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Children's Services, Communities and Families, submitted)

11. Lifelong Learning – Community Based Adult Learning

The development and progress of Strategic and Locality Lifelong Learning – Adult Learning teams was presented to Committee. The report summarised the forms of adult and family learning throughout lockdown.

Members noted the different forms of learning that have had to be adopted as a result of lockdowns, which included a range of online learning activities carried out using Microsoft Teams. A blended offer of adult learning in Edinburgh, with associated long-term benefits, was another new provision introduced through lockdown.

Although members were encouraged that adult learning had adapted through lockdown, they were equally encouraged to learn that face to face learning would resume as soon as possible.

Decision

- 1) To note the Lifelong Learning – Community Based Adult Learning offer to vulnerable adults and families during lockdown.

- 2) To note the challenges and progress made to establish an online learning option for community-based adult and family learning on the Council's recognised and authorised platform Microsoft Teams.
- 3) In compliance with Scottish Government for adult learning due to Covid-19, to note the restrictions and progress made by Strategic and Localities Lifelong Learning Officers towards providing a new blended adult learning offer for Edinburgh with associated longer-term benefits to vulnerable adults and families.
- 4) To note that face to face community adult learning would safely resume as soon as Scottish Government guidance and Council priorities allowed.
- 5) To record the Committee's thanks to the staff team for their work and efforts in such challenging circumstances.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning, Communities and Families, submitted)

12. Holiday Support for Children Affected by a Disability

Information was provided on holiday support for children affected by a disability. The report detailed the changes in support that had occurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic in line with the guidance and restrictions issued by the Westminster and Scottish Governments.

The changes that had been made had be shown to be positive for the group of children supported as the provision had moved to a more targeted and individual approach rather than a universal approach. This provided a greater flexibility to develop more bespoke packages of support.

Members were encouraged that these changes had been met with positivity by the group of children supported and were supportive of the plan to continue this targeted support.

Approval was sought to continue this targeted support over 2021 and to commence with a consultation to develop a more flexible model of support for the next three to four years.

Motion

Committee notes the report and accepts the recommendation 1.1.1, removes 1.1.2, 1.1.3, 1.1.4, and replaces/adds the following recommendations.

- 1.1.2 Notes that the model of service delivery, developed to address the challenges of Covid-19 outlined in the report, should continue to be applied for the Easter holidays.
- 1.1.3 Aims to return to pre-Covid provision for the summer break 2021, provided the covid restrictions allow, and notes that this improved provision was the result of a significant period of consultation with parents in 2018.

- 1.1.4 Agrees to engage with parents as soon as possible and specifically on addressing any previous challenges, lessons learned during Covid-19 provision, and with the goal of exploring further improvements to the pre-Covid-19 provision for children and their families.
- 1.1.5 That any additional funding for Education, identified as part of the amended budgets after May 2021, should consider the challenges around the availability of staffing for the playscheme.
- moved by Councillor Perry, seconded by Councillor Dickie

Amendment

Committee notes the report and commends the work that has been done to sustain some holiday support provision, albeit limited, to the most vulnerable and at-risk young people, during the recent educational restrictions.

Committee recognises the particular stresses that home-schooling has placed on families of children with additional support needs. This is not only an issue in terms of respite for parents/carers but has also resulted in a very limited ability for social interaction for these children and young people. There is a heavy reliance on these interactions (through both their schooling and access to holiday play schemes) to contribute to their wellbeing.

Committee agrees to a review, with comprehensive consultation, on the service provision, both in terms of the Covid-19 restricted provision over the last year, and the service as performed prior to Covid-19. The focus should be on meeting the needs of all these vulnerable children and young people and providing appropriate support to families.

Committee notes the report and accepts recommendation 1.1.1, removes 1.1.2 and 1.1.3, and adds new recommendations as follows:

- 1.1.2 Notes that the model of service delivery, developed to address the challenges of Covid-19 outlined in the report, should continue until after the Easter holiday break and in line with the limited return of pupils in mainstream schools.
- 1.1.3 Aims for a pre-Covid type provision for the Summer break 2021 but influenced by the outcomes of consultation with parents. The consultation should be with all parents who have used the service previously and/or with children attending special schools.
- 1.1.4 Agrees that consultation should commence as soon as is feasible and to conclude at the end of the spring term, to allow the insight gained to influence plans for the summer 2021 holidays.
- 1.1.5 Confirms that the presumption is not for a reduced service, but for an improved service with funding remaining at least at the current levels and being open to all eligible children and young people. Consideration may be given to a focus on the summer holiday provision due to greater availability of appropriate staff, but this must be part of the consultation.

- 1.1.6 That any additional funding for Education, identified as part of amended budgets after the May 2021 elections, should consider one-off options to address the challenges of the play scheme, in particular around staffing resources.
- 1.1.7 Asks council officers to engaged with SQA on feasibility options to develop a vocational qualification, that those working on the play scheme can train towards which would provide a formal qualification as a result of working with our young people.

Renumbers the original 1.1.4 to 1.1.8.

- moved by Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Laidlaw

In accordance with Standing Order 22(12), paragraphs 1.1.5 and 1.1.7 of the Amendment were accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Perry:

- 1) To note the current provision for holiday support for children affected by a disability.
- 2) To note the model of service delivery developed to address the challenges of Covid 19 outlined in the report will be continued over 2021.
- 3) To approve a consultation exercise to inform longer-term planning for future holiday support for children affected by a disability.
- 4) To note financial implications for the service area.
- 5) Notes that the model of service delivery, developed to address the challenges of Covid-19 outlined in the report, should continue to be applied for the Easter holidays.
- 6) Aims to return to pre-Covid provision for the summer break 2021, provided the covid restrictions allow, and notes that this improved provision was the result of a significant period of consultation with parents in 2018.
- 7) Agrees to engage with parents as soon as possible and specifically on addressing any previous challenges, lessons learned during Covid-19 provision, and with the goal of exploring further improvements to the pre-Covid-19 provision for children and their families in time for the Summer Break 2021.
- 8) That any additional funding for Education, identified as part of the amended budgets after May 2021, should consider the challenges around the availability of staffing for the playscheme.
- 9) Confirms that the presumption is not for a reduced service, but for an improved service with funding remaining at least at the current levels and being open to all eligible children and young people. Consideration may be given to a focus on the summer holiday provision due to greater availability of appropriate staff, but this must be part of the consultation.

- 10) Asks council officers to engaged with SQA on feasibility options to develop a vocational qualification, that those working on the play scheme can train towards which would provide a formal qualification as a result of working with our young people.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Children’s Services, Communities and Families, submitted)

13. School Session Dates Amendment 2021/2022

It was proposed to amend the Christmas holiday dates for 2021/2022. The amendment would move the Christmas break from Friday 24 December 2021 to Monday 10 January 2022 to Monday 20 December 2020 to Tuesday 4 January 2021.

School staff, parents/carers and pupils would be consulted on the criteria for setting session dates for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 later this month and proposed dates for these years would be brought to the meeting of this Committee scheduled for 18 May 2021.

Decision

To approve the proposed amendment to the Christmas holiday dates for 2021/22.

(Reference – Report by the Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning, Communities and Families, submitted)

14. Revenue Monitoring 2020-21 – Month Nine Position

The projected month nine revenue monitoring position for the Communities and Families service was presented to Committee.

The total projected gross budget pressure was currently £24.2m, partially offset by one-off mitigations that totalled £11.1m, which resulted in a net residual budget pressure of £13.1m. Members noted that £13.7m of the gross budget pressure was as a result of the Covid19 pandemic.

Members also noted the ongoing management action to reduce the budget pressure while addressing the pressures and impacts of the pandemic. However, given the magnitude of these pressures, there was still be a significant overspend.

Decision

- 1) To note the net residual budget pressure if £13.1m which remained at month nine, of which £13.7m related to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 2) To note that approved savings and operational efficiencies in 2020/21 totalled £4.547m, with £4.141m on track to be delivered in full; £0.306m assessed as amber, pending further detailed implementation plans and £0.100m assessed as being not deliverable.
- 3) To note that measures were being taken to reduce budget pressures.

(Reference – Report by the Chief Executive, submitted)

15. Motion by Councillor Laidlaw – Publication of the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development Review of the Curriculum for Excellence

The following motion was submitted by Councillor Laidlaw in terms of Standing Order 17:

“Committee:

Notes that the Scottish Government has delayed publication of the review of the Scottish curriculum by the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to June, despite confirmation from the OECD that a full draft has been submitted to the Scottish Government. Recognises that a vote in the Scottish Parliament on 17 February calling for publication of this report was won by 65 votes to 58 with cross-party opposition support. Notes that Dr Keir Bloomer, one of the architects of the Curriculum for Excellence, has stated publicly that, “The whole purpose of the OECD review was so that we can learn from the many, many mistakes which have been made in the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence. The sooner the report is in the public domain, the better.”

Recognises that this Council and its officers would benefit from seeing the findings of this review now as pupils return to school and to allow sufficient time to implement any recommendations that can be addressed at a Local Authority level before the start of the next academic year; noting in particular the review’s remit to examine ‘The transition from the Broad General Education (BGE) into Senior Phase – considering how effectively S3 is being used as a transition year in preparing young people for the Senior Phase and the articulation between the BGE and Senior Phase.’

Formally notes its desire to see the interim report published immediately and instructs the Convener to write to the Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education John Swinney MSP to state this is the wish of the City of Edinburgh’s Education, Children and Families Committee.”

Decision

To approve the motion.