

Minutes

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday 15 December 2020

Present:

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

Religious Representatives

Fiona Beveridge, Therese Laing and Rabbi David Rose.

Parent Representative

Alexander Ramage

1. Work Programme

The Committee's Work Programme updated to December 2020 was presented.

Decision

To note the Work Programme.

(Reference – Work Programme 15 December 2020, submitted)

2. Rolling Actions Log

The Rolling Actions Log for December 2020 was presented.

Decision

- 1) To agree to close Action 29 – Outcome of the Consultation Process for Renaming the new Castlebrae Community High School Building.
- 2) To otherwise note the remaining outstanding actions.

(Reference - Rolling Actions Log – 15 December 2020, submitted)

3. Business Bulletin

The Business Bulletin for December 2020 was presented.

Decision

To note the Business Bulletin.

(Reference – Business Bulletin, submitted).

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Burgess declared a non-financial interest in the above item as the parent of children attending Taobh na Paírce Primary School.

4. Energy in School Annual Report

A report on the energy use in schools for the year 2019/20 was presented to committee. The report focused on the carbon emissions and energy expenditure across the Council's Learning Estate.

Members noted the increase in energy expenditure when compared to 2018/19, with an overall increase of 7% reflective of the 10% increase in electricity prices and 15% increase in gas prices. The increase in costs of energy sources was expected to continue in an upward trend. Discussion on the effects of Covid on energy use clarified to members that there had generally been an increase in gas use but a decrease in electricity use as schools lay empty through the first lockdown in early 2020.

The reduction in carbon emissions was noted to be an ongoing effort that was in-keeping with the Council's goal of a net zero carbon target by 2030. The report noted that further consultation to formulate a sustainability strategy in schools was planned over the coming months.

Motion

- 1) To note the content of the report and the detail on current and historic energy use across the Council's learning estate.
 - 2) To note that natural gas use across the learning estate was becoming the predominant source of carbon emissions.
 - 3) To note that in order to meet 2030 net zero carbon targets, significant improvements would be required to the learning estate to improve thermal efficiencies and decarbonise heat sources.
 - 4) To note that the decarbonisation of the learning estate could not be achieved in isolation and that wider alignment with city-wide strategies was essential.
- moved by Councillor Perry, seconded by Councillor Dickie

Amendment

- 1) To note the content of the report and the detail on current and historic energy use across the Council's learning estate.
- 2) To note that natural gas use across the learning estate was becoming the predominant source of carbon emissions.
- 3) To note that in order to meet 2030 net zero carbon targets, significant improvements would be required to the learning estate to improve thermal efficiencies and decarbonise heat sources.
- 4) To note that the decarbonisation of the learning estate could not be achieved in isolation and that wider alignment with city-wide strategies was essential.
- 5) To request an update in the next Business Bulletin on the potential for schools to be heated using ground source heat pumps and other renewable sources.

- 6) To refer this report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for information.
- moved by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Miller

In terms of Standing Order 22(12), the amendment was accepted as an addendum to the motion.

Decision

To approve the following adjusted motion by Councillor Perry:

- 1) To note the content of the report and the detail on current and historic energy use across the Council's learning estate.
- 2) To note that natural gas use across the learning estate was becoming the predominant source of carbon emissions.
- 3) To note that in order to meet 2030 net zero carbon targets, significant improvements would be required to the learning estate to improve thermal efficiencies and decarbonise heat sources.
- 4) To note that the decarbonisation of the learning estate could not be achieved in isolation and that wider alignment with city-wide strategies was essential.
- 5) To request an update in the next Business Bulletin on the potential for schools to be heated using ground source heat pumps and other renewable sources.
- 6) To refer this report to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for information.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 10 December 2019 (item 5); Report by the Executive Director of Resources, submitted).

5. Teaching, Learning and Assessment in the Broad General Education

An update on the Edinburgh Learns Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy in the current Covid context was presented to Committee. The report focused on the assessment of learners' progress including addressing any gaps incurred as a result of school closures. Contingency plans to enable schools to deliver blended learning remotely to young people who were experiencing Covid-related absence were also detailed.

It was noted that schools and teachers had had to significantly change their practice as a result of Covid, most notably with a focus on developing and rolling out a remote style of digital learning during school closures.

Decision

- 1) To note the report.
- 2) To agree that information on the findings of the audit of digital and remote learning provision would be circulated to Committee members when available.

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

6. Promoting Equality

Committee were given a verbal update on the Promoting Equality programme. Despite the pandemic, members were given assurance that progress had been made in a range of different areas throughout the city.

Discussion on the work of promoting equality included the following points:

- A review group into Edinburgh slavery and colonialism had been established.
- Schools had established pupil-led equality groups which had received strong support from parents and teachers as well as a strong following on social media.
- A consultation with BAME staff had been arranged for January 2021.
- Equality training was now included in new teacher training. The training would be included for school representatives, primary teachers, secondary teachers and head teachers.
- Members noted an increase in reports of bullying and prejudice throughout primary and secondary schools. Although worrying, members acknowledged this could be a result of an increase in knowledge on the issues and reflected the breaking of stigmas to confront them.

Decision

To note the verbal update.

7. Edinburgh Learns for Life: Inclusion Annual Report

A summary was provided of the work of the Edinburgh Learns for Life Inclusion Board. The report revolved around the Edinburgh Learns Inclusion Framework, which had been developed in line with the different demands the Covid-19 pandemic had brought.

Members were encouraged by the fact that the Inclusion Framework was now an established and fundamental part of all schools' and early years' approach to inclusion. Phase 1 of the Inclusion Framework had now begun through 4 secondary schools with Wellbeing Support Bases now providing social, emotional and nurture support to students. It was also noted that three schools now had Enhanced Support Bases, which provided language and communication support to students. Looking forward, plans were now in place to extend these bases to schools as Phase 2 began.

In response to the pandemic, the report noted additional support that had been made available to pupils, most notably, support through the transition to and provision of digital learning.

Decision

- 1) To note the implementation of the Edinburgh Learns Inclusion framework
- 2) To note the work undertaken in Phase 1 in secondary schools as part of the three-year plan for secondary schools to have enhanced provision to support inclusion.

- 3) To note the engagement work undertaken with schools regarding exclusions and flexible timetables.
- 4) To note the additional actions undertaken to support inclusion in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic and national lockdown.
- 5) To note the planned City of Edinburgh Council Implementation Plan in response to the Scottish Government recommendations following the national ASL Review.

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

8. Edinburgh Learns: Equity

An update was provided on the key strategic measures and actions taken to support equity for young people in Edinburgh and to provide outcomes for young people who experienced poverty-related barriers.

The key measures and actions taken were noted as follows; attainment data, tracking of progress and attainment by quintile, support for Scottish Attainment Challenge schools, managing of resources to protect equity, appointment of a virtual school leader supported by the Care Experienced Fund, partnerships for equity, renewal planning, Closing the Gap staffing, City of Edinburgh Council Equity Network, pupil equity funding, Discover! Programme.

Decision

To note the report.

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

9. Child Poverty Update

Committee were presented with a report that updated members with the actions taken to tackle child poverty, specifically actions developed and delivered by Schools and Lifelong Learning partners. The main action the report focused on was the attempt to reduce holiday hunger throughout Edinburgh.

Members were also updated on the Council-wide action plan being developed to tackle poverty after calls for action from the Edinburgh Poverty Commission. This included the draft of the City of Edinburgh Local Child Poverty Action Report for 2019/20 which had been produced in line with the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act and set out the existing and proposed actions to reduce and mitigate child poverty.

Decision

- 1) To note the progress of actions to mitigate/reduce child poverty from ongoing work across Schools and Lifelong Learning including an update on holiday hunger.
- 2) To agree the 2019/20 Local Child Poverty Action Report prepared in partnership with NHS colleagues.

- 3) To note the approval by the Policy and Sustainability Committee of a cross-council work programme to take forward Edinburgh Poverty Commission calls to action to end all forms of poverty in Edinburgh.
- 4) To agree that short updates on actions to address child poverty in Edinburgh would be included in future business bulletins to this Committee.
- 5) To agree that future reports on Child Poverty to this Committee would focus on progress with the Local Child Poverty Action Report, for which there was a statutory duty.

(References – Policy and Sustainability Committee 1 December 2020 (item 8); Report by the Chief Executive, submitted).

Declaration of Interests

Councillors Bird and Perry declared a non-financial interest in the above item as non-Executive Directors of Changeworks.

10. Early Learning and Childcare Partner Provider Funding

An update was presented on early learning and childcare partner provider funding relating to the independent review of rates of partner providers from August 2020, the Scottish Government revised timetable for the increase of statutory early learning and childcare hours from 600 to 1140 and funding for local authority settings.

Members noted the expectation that ScotExcel would complete their review in February 2021 and submit their findings to the early years' service. The findings would then be shared with this Committee.

Decision

To note the report.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 3 March 2020 (item 3); Report by the Chief Executive, submitted).

11. Corporate Parenting Action Plan

The high-level objectives of the City of Edinburgh Council 2020-2022 Corporate Parenting Action Plan were presented.

The Plan had been produced in accordance with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and set out the vision for Looked After children and young people including the outcomes the Plan was trying to achieve, the actions needed to do this and the governance arrangements for monitoring progress.

The Plan had been discussed with partners and reflected consultation with children and young people particularly members of the Looked After Children's Champions Board, which had been meeting monthly for over two years.

Members noted the additional funding that would be required to efficiently support the corporate parenting work, with annual funding of £145,000 required.

This would cover the costs of a Corporate Parenting Co-ordinator, two care experienced Participation Officers and an annual residential event for care experienced young people.

The service was currently delivered using external funding and had £35,000 available within existing budgets to go towards the annual cost. With the end of external funding arrangements, additional funding of £110,000 would need to be identified to enable the existing service to continue and progress.

Decision

- 1) To approve the high level 2020-2022 Corporate Parenting Action Plan.
- 2) To refer the report to the Council's Corporate Parenting Member Officer Group.
- 3) To refer the report to the Finance and Resources Committee for consideration as part of the 2021/22 budget process.

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

12. Edinburgh Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2019-20

The Edinburgh Child Protection Committee's annual report for 2019-20 was presented summarising the work of the strategic partnership over the last year. The report also highlighted areas of strength and good practice, alongside identified priority areas for the coming year.

Members noted the positive work carried out city-wide by a range of partners, including the City of Edinburgh Council, Police Scotland, NHS Lothian, the Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations Council (EVOG), Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) and Scottish Children's Reporter's Administration (SCRA).

Decision

- 1) To note the Edinburgh Child Protection Committee Annual Report 2019-20.
- 2) To note the positive contribution made by services across the City in keeping children safe.
- 3) To note that the report would be presented to full Council for information on 4 February 2021.

(Reference – Report by the Chief Executive, submitted)

13. Rising School Rolls Update

An update was provided on the rising school rolls programme. The report focused on all the schools where rising rolls projects were continuing to be progressed or might be a future requirement.

It was noted that there had been significant delays due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and that updated school rolls projections would not now be available until March 2021.

Decision

- 1) To note the report.
- 2) To agree that a further report with the updated school roll projections would be submitted to Committee for consideration in March 2021.

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

Declaration of Interests

Councillor Louise Young declared a non-financial interest in the above item as the parent of a child attending a school in one of the affected areas.

Alex Ramage declared a non-financial interest in the above item as a member of the Edinburgh Parent Council Network.

14. Schools Admissions and Appeals Policy

A proposed revised school admissions and appeals policy was presented. The policy had been updated following an internal audit on school admissions, appeals and capacity planning which had identified a number of significant and moderate weaknesses in both the design and operating effectiveness of key governance and operational controls supporting the school admissions, appeals, and capacity planning processes.

Approval was sought for the revised policy and procedures.

Decision

To approve the updated policy and procedures effective from August 2021.

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

15. Revenue Monitoring 2020-21 – Month Six Position

The projected month six revenue monitoring position for the Communities and Families service was presented. The projections were based on analysis of expenditure and income to the end of September 2020, and expenditure and income projections for the remainder of the financial year.

Members noted that the total projected gross budget pressure was currently £19.9m partially offset by one-off mitigations totalling £5.9m, resulting in a net residual budget pressure of £14.0m. Of this pressure, £12.8m related to the impact of the pandemic.

Members considered the written deputation which had been submitted by the Edinburgh Parent Council Network.

Decision

- 1) To note the net residual budget pressure of £14.0m which remained at month six, of which £12.8m 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 at risk of not being further delivered.
 - 3) To note that measures were being taken to reduce budget pressures.
- (Reference – Report by the Chief Executive, submitted).

16. Internal Audit: Overdue Findings and Key Performance Indicators of 30 October 2020

The Governance, Risk and Best Value Committee had referred a report on Internal Audit Overdue Findings and Key Performance Indicators at 30 October 2020 to this Committee for information.

Decision

To note the report.

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

17. Motion by Councillor Mary Campbell – Appointment to Corporate Parenting Member/Officer Working Group

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

“Committee agrees to replace Councillor Mary Campbell with Councillor Gavin Corbett on the Corporate Parenting Member Officer Working Group.”

- moved by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Miller

Decision

To approve the motion.

18. Motion by Councillor Laidlaw – Delivery of School Sports

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

“Committee:

Acknowledges the value that outdoor sport activity brings to the pupils in City of Edinburgh Council schools and the measures that have been implemented both by the department, schools and national sporting bodies to allow for safe sport to continue despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recognises that City of Edinburgh Council schools have had limited success in restarting sport after the October break (as agreed by Committee) due to the reduced teacher resource available and crucially a prohibition against parental and external coaching through the Active Schools programme.

Notes that this ongoing restriction puts pupils at City of Edinburgh Council Schools at a notable disadvantage compared to their peers in the independent sector and may jeopardise their sporting ambitions and career paths.

Agrees the following:

- 1) To reinstate the Active Schools infrastructure - to allow online bookings and relieve burdens on schools regarding admin, timetabling, risk assessment, payment, registration, PVG checks, insurance and track and trace.
- 2) To allow approved parent volunteers and external coaching to delivery of all outdoor sports clubs while Edinburgh is under Level 3 restrictions.
- 3) To put in place risk assessments for delivery of indoor sports clubs for any reduction to Level 2 restrictions, in line with Scottish Government Sport Scotland guidance - and Education Scotland guidance for indoor PE.
- 4) For Sports Academies to return for netball, football, badminton and hockey in January 2021 and for solutions to be found for these 'identified' young athletes to train on Friday afternoons or Saturdays in Community Sports Hubs with external and specialist coaches.
- 5) Direct and regular communication to the school sports community (including staff, pupils and parents) on how the above will be implemented and indicative timelines."

- moved by Councillor Laidlaw, seconded by Councillor Douglas

Members also considered written deputations supporting the terms of the motion two of which had been submitted by parents of children attending Edinburgh schools and one from an Active Schools Co-ordinator.

Decision

- 1) To approve the motion subject to the Committee political group leads being consulted immediately on any potential requirement to review the delivery of school sports should Edinburgh be moved into the Scottish Government's Protection Level 4.
- 2) To circulate a briefing note to members on;
 - The impact of the Covid-19 restrictions on the delivery of curricular (Nat5, Higher, Advanced Higher) sports.
 - The position of CEC and their delivery of school sports in comparison to other local authorities across Scotland.
 - Details of the level of outdoor sports activity which had been targeted at individual schools across the school estate.

19. Motion by Councillor Laidlaw – Funding of Flu Vaccine by Head Teachers for Staff

The Council had remitted the following motion by Councillor Laidlaw to this Committee to allow proper investigation and discussion with officers to agree the way forward:

“Council:

Notes that in previous winter terms, Headteachers were permitted to use school funds to cover winter flu jabs and a number had planned and budgeted this vaccination for staff in 2020, especially as a means to help reduce absences and co-infection with COVID; noting that supply teachers are in particularly short supply due to the pressures of the pandemic.

Notes that the private provision of flu vaccination can be done quickly and at relatively low cost (circa £12-15 per head).

Notes that a new Directive from City of Edinburgh Council advised Headteachers that they were no longer to use discretionary school funds to pay for flu vaccines for staff.

Notes that this new Directive has led some Headteachers to request that vaccination funds are covered by Parent Councils.

Notes that, given the pandemic, greater numbers of people have been offered the flu vaccine by government and all those offered the vaccine are being urged to take up the offer to protect themselves and others and help the NHS avoid additional pressure over the winter period.

Notes that ordering by private providers of flu vaccination is done many months in advance of the flu season and thus schools choosing to spend discretionary funds on flu jabs for staff will not be impacting on supplies provided to vulnerable groups free of charge.

Requests that City of Edinburgh Council rescinds the directive to headteachers asking them not to spend discretionary funds on flu vaccinations and allows them to make a decision based on their perceived need and with the goal to protect staff and prevent absences in this challenging year.”

- moved by Councillor Laidlaw, seconded by Councillor Rust

Members also considered a written deputation from the Edinburgh Parent Council Network which had been submitted in relation to the terms of the motion.

Decision

- 1) To approve the motion.
- 2) To refer the motion to the Policy and Sustainability Committee for noting.

(Reference – Council 10 December 2020 (item 17)

20. Boroughmuir High School – Post Project Review Update

The Committee, in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, excluded the public from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business for the reason that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7(A) of the Act.

An update on the recommendations from the Boroughmuir High School Post Project Review (PPR) was presented.

Decision

To note the update.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 9 October 2018 (item 17); Report by the Chief Executive, submitted).