

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Tuesday 12 January 2016 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors SHEENA WELSH, LYNNE DEVINE, COLIN BROWN, DAVID FAIRWEATHER, MARTYN GEDDES, SHEILA HANDS, JIM HOUSTON, DAVID MAY, GLENNIS MIDDLETON, MAIRI EVANS, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, MARK SALMOND, EWAN SMITH, BRIAN BOYD and PAUL VALENTINE.

Church

Representatives: Mrs GEORGINA MALLIE and Mr BILL SIMPSON.

Teacher

Representatives: Ms KATRINA JOHNSTON and Mr JOHN PRATTI.

Councillor WELSH, Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Donald Morrison and Margaret Thomson with Councillors Mairi Evans and Brian Boyd substituting respectively. An apology for absence was also intimated on behalf of Mr David Adams.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTES

(a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 10 November 2015 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Angus Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

The minute of meeting of the Angus Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers of 30 September 2015, a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**Appendix I**).

(c) Special Appeal Sub-Committee

The minute of meeting of the Special Appeal Sub-Committee of 12 November 2015, a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**Appendix II**).

4. INFORMATION REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 26 OCTOBER TO 14 DECEMBER 2015

There was submitted Report No 1/16 by the Strategic Director – People providing key information to members with regard to services delivered to the People Directorate for the period 26 October to 14 December 2015.

The Convener, on behalf of the Committee, congratulated and commended all staff involved in the opening of Bramble Cottages as referred to in Schedule 3 of the Report. In respect of Schedule 7 to the Report, the Committee welcomed Gregor Reid and Erin Lees, pupils of Monifieth High School to the meeting. Gregor and Erin provided an overview of the pupil's involvement in the inspection process and focus groups following which members asked the pupils a number of questions.

Thereafter, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the Information Report for the period 26 October to 14 December 2015.

5. TEACHER NUMBERS AND RECRUITMENT

There was submitted Report No 2/16 by the Strategic Director – People summarising the current position in relation to teacher numbers, information regarding the challenges to maintain teacher numbers, together with a summary of the actions being taken to meet those challenges.

The Report indicated that recruitment of new teachers was becoming increasingly challenging within Angus and although the Council had not experienced the significant teacher shortages that a number of local authorities had reported, evidence had suggested that this could develop into an area of local specific concern. As of 1 December 2015, there were currently eight vacancies within primary schools with a small number of those schools requiring the Head Teacher to teach classes, reducing their capacity to take forward school improvements. There were also currently 16 vacancies within secondary schools with pockets of staffing shortages, particularly in attracting suitable candidates in the subjects of mathematics and sciences.

A number of proposals, which it was hoped would address the teacher shortages, were detailed within the Report together with a protocol to ensure that as far as possible, all classes had access to a teacher.

Having heard from a number of members, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the current situation with regards to teacher numbers and recruitment, as detailed in the Report: and
- (ii) to approve the proposals, as detailed in Section 5 to the Report.

6. INCREASING KINSHIP CARE ALLOWANCES TO ENSURE PARITY WITH FOSTER CARERS

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee of 10 April 2008, there was submitted Report No 3/16 by the Strategic Director – People proposing arrangements to bring allowances in respect of children and kinship care placement in line with those for approved foster care placements following an agreement reached between COSLA and the Scottish Government.

The Report indicated that the Scottish Government had outlined that with effect from 1 October 2015, it was expected that eligible kinship carers would have access to kinship care allowances and that these would be at a rate equivalent to that payable to foster carers minus any child related benefit. The policy change applied to allowances only and not to the fees which were also payable to foster carers. In order to implement the policy, individual carers would have to be assessed as kinship carers and undergo a financial assessment to determine the impact of any child related benefits on the level of any payment they should receive.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to approve the uplift of kinship care allowances to the same level as Angus Council foster carers minus any child related benefit entitlement: and
- (ii) to approve that the uplift be backdated to 1 October 2015.