

ANGUS COUNCIL – 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE – UPDATE ON EDUCATION RECOVERY

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ABSTRACT

This report provides Council with an update on the financial implications associated with the re-opening of Angus Schools and Early Learning settings, and of the indicative financial implications should schools be required to continue to provide a similar level of resource to meet hygiene and safety guidelines for the entire school year.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Council: -

- (i) Notes the update on how the revenue from the Connecting Scotland Fund has been utilised to enable digital inclusion for children and young people, as outlined in section 4.2
- (ii) Notes the allocation of £1.698m of Scottish Government funding to offset some of the costs of the recruitment of up to 40 additional teachers and 21 additional support staff for one year, as further described in section 4.3
- (iii) Notes the updated position on the additional expenditure being incurred to enable the arrangement of school transport for session 2020-21 as outlined in section 4.4
- (iv) Notes the re-purposing of Education and Lifelong budgets to meet the initial costs of the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and essential hygiene and safety items in accordance with public health guidance, as outlined in section 4.5
- (v) Notes the projected ongoing costs of the enhanced cleaning regime, provision of PPE and other hygiene and safety items to support full-time attendance at school and the likely allocation of Scottish Government funding to off-set these costs, as outlined in section 4.5
- (vi) Notes the update and indicative cost of the provision of critical childcare until 5 August, as outlined in section 4.6

2 ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGU LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the **Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan** and **Locality Plans**:

- The best start in life for children;
- Improved physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing;
- More opportunities for people to achieve success.

The **Tayside Plan** for children young people and families 2017-20

- Reduce inequalities and disadvantage;
- Protect the most vulnerable from harm;
- Take the right action to prevent needs arising in the first place;
- Provide the right support to meet needs at the earliest appropriate time;
- Deliver individualised, proportionate and whole family-based support;

- Provide services which are experienced as integrated and consistent;
- Involve children, young people and parents in the design of services;
- Develop holistic services for children, parents and communities;
- Improve outcomes.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Angus Council closed all schools as of 24 March 2020 following a statement from Scottish Government. From that date until the end of term, children and young people were supported to learn at home.

3.2 From Thursday 26 March until Friday 26 June Angus Council offered critical childcare, Monday to Friday, in eleven school based hubs, six private provider hubs, and with 27 childminders. Saturday and Sunday critical childcare provision was offered by 10 childminders.

Throughout the summer holiday period critical childcare was provided in eight school based hubs, 7 private provider hubs and with 27 childminders. This ended on Wednesday 5 August in school based hubs and Friday 31 July with all other providers.

3.3 On 11th August 2020, all Angus schools reopened to staff. Children and young people resumed full time attendance on Monday 17th August.

3.4 Angus Council, as the Education Authority for the Angus area, has a number of statutory duties as regards education. These duties include: -

- i. Securing that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education,
- ii. To provide primary and secondary school provision for not less than 190 days a year,
- iii. To provide or secure the provision of free school meals to certain pupils,
- iv. To make adequate and efficient provision of additional support for pupils with additional support needs,
- v. To secure that the mandatory amount (specified by the Scottish Ministers) of early learning and childcare is made available for each eligible pre-school child belonging to its area.

The Coronavirus Act 2020 provides the following in relation to schools and education:-

- a. A requirement on the operators of educational establishments to have regard to any advice relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus from the Chief Medical Officer of the Scottish Administration or such other person as may be designated by the Scottish Ministers.
- b. The Scottish Ministers have the power to give directions in relation to access to educational establishments being restricted for a specified period (an "Educational Closure Direction").
- c. An Educational Closure Direction can relieve the operator of an educational establishment from the failure to comply with a legal obligation to the extent that the failure would be attributable to the Direction (such as the duties referred to in (i) to (v) above).
- d. An Educational Closure Direction may require the taking of actions in general terms, or require the taking of particular actions, that the Scottish Ministers consider reasonable and make such other provision as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate.
- e. The Scottish Ministers have the power to give directions in relation to the continuing operation of an educational establishment for a specified period (an "Educational Continuity Direction").
- f. An Educational Continuity Direction can relieve the operator of an educational establishment from the failure to comply with a legal obligation to the extent that the failure would be attributable to the Direction (such as the duties referred to in (i) to (v) above).
- g. An Educational Continuity Direction can impose a wide range of requirements in relation to, for

example, opening times for schools, the attendance at educational establishments of specified groups of people, prohibiting or restricting access to an educational establishment, requiring measures to ensure safe standards of hygiene and other measures to protect health be put in place and require the alteration of term dates, holiday dates or examination dates.

- h. An Educational Continuity Direction has effect until the end of the period specified in the direction or until revoked by the Scottish Ministers. If the Direction relieves a failure to comply with a legal requirement then it must be reviewed every 21 days.

Five Educational Continuity Directions have been made by the Scottish Ministers. It is stated within the guidance note accompanying the fifth Direction that at this stage it is not anticipated that a further direction will be required. The fifth Direction came into effect on 10 August 2020 and is valid until 30 August 2020 and replaces previous directions. This Direction includes the following provisions:-

1. An education authority may reopen schools under their management for the provision of education to pupils from 11 August 2020.
2. Each education authority is required to ensure that all schools under their management are open to pupils for the provision of education no later than 18 August 2020.
3. Each education authority is required to prepare contingency plans which can be used immediately in the event of a local coronavirus outbreak.
4. In making the provision or carrying on the activities set out in the Direction an education authority must have regard to the objective of preventing the transmission of coronavirus, to the welfare of children and young people and staff, and to the importance of continuity of education.
5. In making the provision or carrying on the activities set out in the Direction an education authority must have regard to relevant guidance issued by the Scottish Ministers.

4. SCHOOL SESSION 2020-21

4.1 Return to School in August 2020

Angus schools re-opened to staff on Tuesday 11 August. Wednesday 12 August to Friday 14 August saw the phased return of our children and young people. This was planned to allow staff, children, young people and parents to experience and understand new hygiene and safety measures. All children and young people returned to school full time on Monday 17 August.

All of our schools and early learning settings were supported to complete risk assessments for the physical buildings. All employees returning to work have also completed the Individual Risk Assessment Tool, and Head Teachers have engaged directly with staff to support their return to the workplace. Sufficient stocks of PPE, hand sanitiser and lidded bins were provided. Signage was provided for use both on common routes to school and within the curtilage of the school.

Due to previous planning for a return to part-time attendance all schools have the information required to enable this model should Scottish Government instruct this. It is, however, important to note that any move to part-time attendance, especially if coupled with revised advice to physically distance on school transport may necessitate a period of time to enable the required transport to be put in place.

4.2 Digital Inclusion

On 06 July 2020 Angus Council accepted an offer of grant funding for the purchase of digital devices and connectivity to tackle digital exclusion for children and young people. The council was eligible to claim up to £441,541 of capital funding and £75,982 of revenue funding. On 12 August 2020 we received confirmation that our claim, including our bid for the digital innovation

part of the grant was successful.

We have purchased 1,366 Chromebooks and 189 iPads. The majority of the devices have been delivered and are being distributed to schools. We have ordered 360 'MiFi' portable internet connections. The internet connections allow unlimited data for one year. Head Teachers have been provided with advice from the Grant Terms to ensure devices are allocated appropriately. A device loan agreement has also been drawn up.

The revenue portion of the grant for digital innovation will allow us to fund a short-term IT project management post. The post will support the previously approved Digital Officers, (report 187/20 refers). The remit of the post will be technical and focused on improving the use of, and engagement with, the GLOW platform.

We have ordered three AV1 Robots which connect children and young people who are too ill to attend school with their peers and learning. Each robot costs approximately £4,000 including a 12 month service package. This resource will ensure that we are able to continue to provide education to these vulnerable young people.

4.3 Staffing

Special Arrangements Committee of 23 June 2020 authorised additional funding of £0.926m, from the £4.8m General Fund Contingency balance, for the recruitment of up to 40 temporary teachers and the equivalent of 21 FTE school support staff for the period August-December 2020 (Report 179/20 refers).

The Angus Council meeting of 16 July authorised an amendment to the purpose of these funds and increased the duration of the temporary contract for additional staff to one year, at a total cost of £2.3m,(report 187/20 refers).

As at 26 August Angus Council has recruited 22 additional teaching staff at a cost of circa £1.1m and 9 School and Pupil Support Assistants with a further 330 additional hours being offered to existing support staff, at a cost of £0.3m for one academic year. Recruitment of additional staff is continuing and the expectation remains that the funding previously agreed (£2.3m for one academic year) will be required in full.

From the start of term some of the temporary teachers have been used to cover Covid19 related absence. The additional temporary staff are working with children and young people, providing targeted support to help to "compensate for the loss of learning".

This additional workforce will also be used to respond to increased staff absence due to contact and trace arrangements. A Service Leader, will co-ordinate the effective deployment of this resource. This will include the recruitment of additional staff in response to specific subject need in secondary schools.

4.4 School Transport

In Report 187/20 it was noted that the cost of providing school transport with 1 metre physical distancing would result in additional expenditure in the order of £870,000 between August and October 2020. On 30 July 2020 the Scottish Government published updated guidance to support the reopening of schools. As part of this guidance, there is now no requirement for physical distancing on dedicated school bus services. For children and young people travelling on 'registered' bus services, which are also accessible to the public, distancing is not required so long as other mitigations are in place.

The Council's Transport Team have been working closely with transport operators to ensure services can run safely. Enhanced safety measures are in place on vehicles including a requirement for hand sanitising prior to boarding the vehicle, ventilation and face coverings.

The revised position for school transport means that services are running as close to 'normal' capacity as possible. There are a small number of routes where some amendments have been required due to the vehicle types available or the needs of children travelling. The result of this is that additional expenditure on school transport is now estimated to be in the region of £300,000 to the end of financial year 2020/21. This is partially offset by an £80,000 saving made earlier in the financial year as a result of the Council's Key Supplier Support arrangements.

4.5 Safety and Hygiene Measures

The provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and hygiene items for the childcare hubs and to support the limited opening of schools in June was in the region of £10,000. Planning for the wider reopening of schools in August has incurred further expenditure to ensure appropriate provision of items including PPE, hand sanitizer, disinfectant sprays, signage and lidded bins. The cost of this to date is approximately £95,000.

Most of these costs have been met through the re-purposing of funds from the Early Learning and Childcare revenue budget. A small portion of the expenditure has been met from the Supplies and Services budget within Education.

The Education Service is working closely with schools to determine ongoing demand for key hygiene items such as hand sanitiser and disposable cleansing wipes. Assuming supplies continue to be required at the current level, the projected cost to the end of academic year 2020/21 may be as much as £470,000 (£343,000 in financial year 2020/21). It should be noted that this remains an estimate as yet and the service is working to explore alternative hygiene items which meet safety requirements with less of a financial implication. A new digital order form is being developed and will be in place this term. The new order process will enable fortnightly monitoring of expenditure on these items.

We recognise that Scottish Government and Public Health advice and guidance on the hygiene and safety resources required to keep our schools open safely is subject to constant review and change. On 25 August advice on the use of face coverings was issued. There is a risk that updated guidance and additional requirements may result in further demands on budgets.

An enhanced cleaning regime is in place in our schools. A specification for this cleaning has been agreed by Angus, Dundee City and Perth & Kinross Councils in conjunction with Tayside Contracts. The regime complies with requirements set out by Health Protection Scotland. All schools are receiving an additional daytime cleaning service ranging from 1.5hrs to 8hr depending on the size of school. The specification is being reviewed on a regular basis now that our schools are fully occupied, and we anticipate there may be further changes to the model.

Initial indicative costs have been provided by Tayside Contracts suggesting the additional cleaning will cost £745,134 for the duration of this school year (£497,000 in financial year 2020/21). However, as noted further amendments are expected which may reduce this figure. Work is now underway to better understand these costs and the scope for revision.

It is anticipated that Scottish Government funding will be provided to councils to meet some of the costs arising from enhanced cleaning and hygiene regimes. At present it is understood that a fund of £20million will be distributed first. Angus Council's allocation may be in the region of £400,000. A further fund of £30million is anticipated but allocations will depend on being able to demonstrate additional costs incurred. Details of how this will be distributed are not available as yet but are expected soon. For budget planning purposes an allocation of £600,000 has been assumed to be available from this further funding.

Any shortfall due to the government funding not meeting the actual cost may necessitate re-purposing of the ELC budget – some scope in ELC revenue funding exists but officers wish to retain that financial headroom to support potential additional ELC capital costs arising from project delays due to the pandemic.

4.6 Support for children, young people and families

The first round of applications for key worker critical childcare provision in all Angus hub locations- school based, private provider and childminder, resulted in the provision of 1,571 places.

The vast majority of these places were accessed during term time as the relaxation of lockdown restrictions in early July meant that additional childcare options became available for children and families.

The summer critical childcare offer, based in 8 school hubs, received applications for 423 children to access provision until the 5th August. Additionally, approximately 150 children were also provided with critical childcare provision through private providers and childminders during this summer period.

The total cost of all critical childcare provision is still to be finalised however it is estimated that the full cost of this provision will be circa £950,000. This cost is being met through the realignment and redistribution of the Early Learning and Childcare multi-year funding package. This is ring-fenced funding the Council has been permitted to use in this manner by Scottish Government.

Four social workers have been appointed and are aligned with locality teams funded from agreed budget carry forward resources.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 All of the estimated additional costs and the grant and other funding expected to be available to partially pay for these have been captured in the separate report for Council on Revisions to the 2020/21 Revenue Budget. Some of the costs and funding cover an academic year which straddles two financial years so the table below summarises the position

Budget Area	2020/21 Impact	2021/22 Impact	2020/21 Funding method	2021/2022 Funding method
Recruitment of additional 40 teaching staff	£1 333 000	£667 000	Scottish Government £ 1 062 000 Shortfall authorised in report 187/20	Scottish Government £530 000 Shortfall authorised in report 187/20
Recruitment of additional 21 FTE support staff	£200 000	£100 000	Scottish Government £71 000 Shortfall authorised in report 187/20	Scottish Government £35 000 Shortfall authorised in report 187/20
Provision of hygiene and safety items	£438 000	£127 000	ELL Budget – £95 000 Awaiting confirmation of government budget allocation and conditions	Awaiting confirmation of government budget allocation and conditions
Enhanced cleaning regime	£497 000	£254 000	Awaiting confirmation of government budget allocation and conditions	Awaiting confirmation of government budget allocation and conditions
Alterations to transport	£147 000	£73 000	Authorised in 187/20	Authorised in 187/20
Total	£2 615 000	£1 221 000		

- 5.2 It is noted that Scottish Government grant funding is available to offset some of the costs of recruiting additional teachers and support staff and extending the contracts of support staff. For 2020/21 government funding is £1.062 million for additional teachers and £71 000 for support staff is available. For 2021-22 government funding is £530 000 for additional teachers and £35 000 for support staff. A total of £1.698 million
- 5.3 Current additional recruitment of 22 teachers will cost in the region of £1.1 million. With the cost of additional support staff being £300 000 for one academic year. The recruitment of further additional teachers is being closely managed based on need and the availability of staff.
- 5.4 The funding of hygiene and safety items, as well as enhanced cleaning regimes is discussed in the 2020/21 budget restatement report. (Report 211/20 refers). Continued requirement beyond the end of 31 March 2021 will be addressed as part of the 2021/22 budget setting process. It is noted that we anticipate Scottish Government funding to offset some of these costs but final details are awaited. Projected costs remain subject to change and further reports may be brought to members if necessary.

RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Failure to continue to provide necessary hygiene and safety items, and enhanced cleaning regimes may result in increased risk of infection in schools and non-compliance with health and safety requirements.
- 6.2 Although it is anticipated that the ELC budget will be re-purposed to cover the shortfall in cost not met by government funding of all hygiene, PPE resources and cleaning until 31 March 2021 any further lockdown before that date which results in a further delay to building works may cause additional pressure on this budget.
- 6.3 As the pattern of transmission of the virus evolves Scottish Government may issue updated advice on hygiene and safety requirements. Any update may necessitate additional expenditure.
- 6.4 Temporary staff may take up offers of permanent employment. Whilst this will reduce the cost of additional staff it will mean that we are not able to provide the same level of targeted support.

7. CONCLUSION

This report outlines the continued challenges presented by the risk of COVID-19 and its management in our schools. It also offers the best professional judgement and advice on information available from Scottish Government currently. It outlines challenges should advice change at short notice either in terms of physical distancing or localised rise in infections.

The report outlines the re-purposing of the current Education and Lifelong Learning budget.

Even with government funding, in order to ensure that we comply with public health guidelines, the report concludes that additional funding may be required from contingency reserves should further lockdown result in the ELC budget being insufficient to fund the additional cost of adherence with said guidelines.

8. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive, Director of Children, Families and Justice (Chief

Social Work Officer), Director of Finance, Director of Infrastructure, Director of HR, Digital Enablement, IT and Business Support, and the Director of Legal and Democratic were consulted during the preparation of this report.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An equalities impact assessment has been completed.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980; Educational Continuity Direction dated 10 August 2020; The Coronavirus Act 2020

Recovery and Resilience – Steps for Angus Schools: https://www.angus.gov.uk/sites/angus-cms/files/2020-06/179_3.pdf

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