

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 17 NOVEMBER 2020

EDUCATION RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE UPDATE

REPORT BY KELLY MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

**ABSTRACT**

This report provides Committee with an update on the response and recovery process for Angus schools and early learning and childcare settings following the resumption of full-time attendance in August.

**1. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Notes the general updates provided regarding the return of schools and early learning and childcare settings as set out in sections 4.1 to 4.20.
- (ii) Notes the updated financial information as set out in sections 6.1-6.4.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) 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 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 included 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.

This Direction expired on 30 August 2020. There have been no further Educational Continuity Directions.

#### **4. SCHOOL SESSION 2020-21**

##### **Update on Early Learning and Childcare**

4.1 Key worker childcare was provided through a range of facilities including childcare hubs in schools, contracted partner nurseries and childminders. 1,571 children were accommodated from initial applications at the beginning of lockdown in March, through to the end of June. At the beginning of the summer holidays in July, reduced provision of key worker childcare was then put in place for 423 children. The provision and funding of key worker childcare ended on Wednesday 5 August in school-based hubs and Friday 31 July with all other providers.

4.2 Despite the suspension of the statutory obligation on local authorities to expand the entitlement of funded ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours a year by August 2020, in Angus the implementation went ahead as planned in August and all eligible children can now receive up to 1140 hours of funded ELC in school year 2020-21. This was made possible by:

- Prior completion of a number of construction projects, which had been phased in a prioritised way since the programme commenced in 2017 to ensure some of the most critical extensions and refurbishments were completed first;
- Flexibility built into workforce planning, complemented by the recruitment of 200 new staff ready to start in August;
- Increased use of private, voluntary and childminder provision, which has been made possible by a successful procurement exercise earlier this year which resulted in contracts being awarded to 64 providers;
- The use of temporary alternative accommodation pending the completion of construction projects in Carnoustie, Edzell, Birkhill and Newtyle.

4.3 Construction is progressing well on all active sites, despite restrictions due to the need for physical distancing. It is anticipated that all currently active construction projects in the expansion programme will be completed by January 2021. Two minor projects have been deferred until summer 2021.

4.4 Financial support has been made available to all contracted partner ELC providers throughout the pandemic, including:

- Continuation of statutory ELC funding
- Payment of the remaining full salary and other essential running costs for all private partners acting as key worker childcare hubs
- Enhanced hourly rates for childminders providing weekend key worker childcare
- An additional grant scheme for partner childminders, aimed at supporting the enhancement of outdoor play and learning and improving the safety and resilience of these settings in the context of Covid-19

##### **Update on Primary and Secondary Schools**

4.5 The current school session began on 11 August 2020 for staff and 12 August 2020 for children and young people. Attendance was phased for the first week with all children and young people resuming school on a full-time basis from 17 August 2020.

4.6 Similar to other local authorities, attendance of children and young people was lower than usual in the first few weeks of term. This pattern began to stabilise in early September and attendance is now in line with previous years. Attendance is being reported daily to Scottish Government and can be viewed online via an interactive dashboard:

- 4.7 Staff absence due to Covid-19 has remained low throughout. Staff attendance is reported on a weekly basis to Scottish Government. Data for Angus and the rest of Scotland can be viewed via the above link at section 4.6.
- 4.8 From August to October 2020, there have been 18 requests for home education and 2 for flexi-learning. This is an increase compared to the same time period in 2019 when we received 3 applications for home education. This local increase in requests is also reflected across other local authorities in Scotland. These requests cite safety concerns about transmission of the virus in schools as well as parents simply wishing to spend more time with their children.
- 4.9 The Educational Psychology Service issued a questionnaire to all staff in schools and ELC settings during 'lockdown'. The 1,075 responses received were analysed using measurable concepts of wellbeing. Although some staff reported high levels of anxiety during Covid-19 lockdown, the majority felt that there were structures in place that helped them feel supported and that they had enough guidance and information about mental health and wellbeing at work. Staff reported that their return to work would be supported by clear communication, safe working environments, and a focus on children's and staff wellbeing. This feedback, along with the information on the new EPS Staff Wellbeing Module, was shared at the first virtual HT Development Day of the new session.
- 4.10 We continue to meet requirements for schools in terms of health, safety and hygiene measures. In light of updated national guidance, our risk assessment template has been reviewed and updated. This updated position includes revised information regarding ventilation strategies. Dedicated ventilation guidance has also been prepared and shared with schools. The Education Directorate has worked closely with colleagues in the Infrastructure Directorate and the council's Health & Safety Compliance Team as part of this work. We have consulted with trade union colleagues as part of our review of the risk assessment. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) requirements are being met. Schools have estimated their requirements for the current term and a bulk delivery provided. An online ordering process is in place for any other requirements that arise during the term. Schools have been offered an additional general waste bin or collection to assist them with the increased waste being generated by cleaning and PPE. The latest financial implications arising from all aspects of hygiene and safety are set out in Section 6.
- 4.11 From August – October a limited school meal service was offered. Children attending early years and primary settings had a choice of cold bagged packed lunches. Secondary schools have had a range of hot and cold options to suit their individual catering requirements. School meal uptake was very low in Term 1, including for those entitled to free school meals. A hot bagged offer is now in place for early years and primary settings. Due to committee timetables, a verbal update on uptake will be available at Committee if required by Members.

#### **Update on Additional Teachers and Support Staff**

- 4.12 As noted in Report 179/20, authorisation has previously been granted for the recruitment of 40 additional recovery teachers. Following the initial recruitment exercise, it is now anticipated that a maximum of 31.8FTE additional teachers will be in place during session 2020/21. To date 23.4FTE additional primary teachers and 8.4FTE additional secondary teachers have been recruited and deployed to work with schools in Angus. Recovery teachers are being deployed to add capacity to support loss of learning and to improve attainment in reading by promoting a council wide reading culture as well as targeted support. The focus upon reading is based upon a wide range of research which tells us that improvements in reading impact in children's performance across all areas of the curriculum as well as supporting good mental health. From August to October the additional teachers also supported the smooth running of our schools by providing short-term absence cover for teachers who were absent for Covid testing. The latest financial update is set out in Section 6.
- 4.13 To date nine School and Pupil Support Assistants (SPSAs) have been recruited to existing vacancies to support children's return to school and identified loss of learning. These posts are funded from the existing Additional Support Needs service budget. Existing support staff have also increased their hours by 304 hours which is equivalent to an additional 11FTE. We are continuing our efforts to recruit additional SPSAs.

- 4.14 Angus Council has accepted two grant offers from Scottish Government to cover the cost of additional teachers and extending contracts for existing support staff. The details of these grants and the updated anticipated costs are noted in section 6.

#### **Update on Digital Learning and Teaching**

- 4.15 Special Arrangements Committee on 23 June 2020 noted the repurposing of approximately £100,000 of TRIC funding to establish a small team of digital officers within the Angus Virtual School. Report [179/20](#) refers. The successful candidates took up post on 19 October 2020. A key priority for the new officers will be the review and refresh of the GLOW platform for Angus. Officers will also assist in the creation of an Angus home learning resource which will include resources for parents/carers enabling them to support learning at home. The officers will also develop a digital support resource for staff. An important aspect of the digital officer role will be to enhance collaboration across the Tay Regional Improvement Collaborative in order to build sustainable practices.
- 4.16 The new posts will be supported by a temporary project manager who will be responsible for the technical work relating to the GLOW review. This post is being scoped at present.
- 4.17 e-Sgoil has expanded its national offer to schools with a programme of live lessons for the Broad General Education. These lessons are intended to support the learning of children and young people who are at home due to Covid-19 illness or self-isolation. Participation is via a referral process. After-school study support sessions for senior phase courses are also available and young people are able to sign up for this resource. Schools are actively promoting the use of this resource.
- 4.18 A number of teaching staff have volunteered to contribute to the e-Sgoil programme. This is being co-ordinated across the regional collaborative.
- 4.19 As noted in Report [187/20](#) the Council has been offered a grant of around £517,000 towards the provision of digital devices and connectivity for children and young people. To date approximately 1900 Chromebooks, iPads and MiFi portable internet devices have been received and distributed to schools. Using the criteria set out by the grant terms, schools have identified the children and young people who will receive a device and are leading on the distribution.
- 4.20 An additional three AV1 robot devices have been purchased to support remote learning for children and young people who are unable to attend school due to ill health.

#### **Update on Support for Children and Families**

- 4.21 We continue our work to support children and families. Approximately £51,000 of the Holiday Food and Fund budget was utilised to provide a direct payment during the October holidays to children eligible for free school meals. Plans are in place to extend this provision to cover the Christmas break. We continue to provide supermarket vouchers for families unable to access the direct payment scheme. An evaluation of direct payments and voucher provision will be completed with stakeholders in January 2021. Findings will help to inform future provision.
- 4.22 As agreed in [Report 191/20](#) the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning has delegated authority to claim a portion of the 'Test & Protect' grant funding from Scottish Government. Approximately £112,000 was utilised in September to make a direct payment to eligible families for the purpose of 'Food and Fuel' support. Individual grants totalling £114,500 have been made available to schools to provide 'whole family' support. In addition, we have also provided 1,200 Social Supermarket memberships to the value of £6,000.

### **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1 It is proposed that the content of this report be formally noted by the Committee and that Committee requests that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning prepares further updates as required

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The following table provides the latest financial position for a range of Education Directorate budget areas:

Budget Area	Updated 2020/21 Impact	Updated 2021/22 Impact	2020/21 Funding Method	2021/22 Funding Method
Recruitment of additional 31.8FTE teaching staff	£1,060,000	£530,000	Scottish Government - £1,061,393  Shortfall authorised in Report 187/20	Scottish Government - £530,697  Shortfall authorised in Report 187/20
Recruitment of additional 11 FTE support staff	£115,133	£57,567	Scottish Government – £70,759  Shortfall authorised in Report 187/20	Scottish Government - £35,380  Shortfall authorised in Report 187/20
Provision of hygiene and safety items in preparation for the start of session	£95,000	N/A	ELL Budgets - £95,000	N/A
Provision of hygiene and safety items on an ongoing basis	£363,000	£137,000	Scottish Government - £363,000 (awaiting confirmation of conditions)	To be addressed as a budget issue for 2021/22
Enhanced cleaning regime	£497,000	£254,000	Scottish Government - £115,000 (Awaiting confirmation of conditions)  Awaiting details of arrangements for further grant funding	To be addressed as a budget issue for 2021/22
Alterations to transport	£32,000	£10,000	Authorised in Report 187/20	Authorised in Report 187/20
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£2,162,133</b>	<b>£988,567</b>		
Scottish Government Grant	£1,610,152	£566,077		
Repurposing of existing budgets	£95,000	N/A		
<b>Net Cost to Council</b>	<b>£456,981</b>	<b>£422,490</b>		

6.2 As previously noted, Scottish Government grant funding has been allocated to meet the costs of recruiting additional teachers and support staff. The expenditure in the table above is based on actual FTE recruited and assumes employment of teachers at mid-point on the salary scale (£50,000 per annum). As such the costs associated with additional teachers has reduced and may, if this remains at the current level, all be covered by grant funding. It is important to state that any increased transmission of the virus leading to increased staff absence may necessitate additional recruitment.

- 6.3 The additional cost of SPSAs is currently not covered by the amount of grant funding available. As schools continue to adapt to ensuring that the appropriate learning and safety and hygiene support is in place it may be necessary to employ additional SPSAs which would further increase the shortfall.
- 6.4 Based on an analysis of spend to date on PPE, the latest projected cost for the provision of hygiene and safety items on an ongoing basis is £500,000 for the full academic session. This figure remains an estimate and we continue to monitor expenditure closely. The Scottish Government has announced two grant funds to support local authorities with meeting the costs of PPE, cleaning and other logistical arrangements. From the initial £20million fund Angus Council has been allocated £478,000. A further £30million fund will be available however details are not yet available of how this funding will be distributed or accessed. For budget planning purposes, £600,000 has been assumed to be available from this further funding and this was reflected in the budget revisions approved by Council on 10 September 2020 (report 211/20 refers). As noted in Report 218/20, it is anticipated that part of the Early Learning and Childcare revenue budget will be repurposed to cover any shortfall not met by government funding.
- 6.5 The table above notes the latest additional cost estimate arising from the provision of school transport during the pandemic. Initial estimates have been revised downward based on the actual arrangements now in place. The projection for the year assumes that all current regulations in terms of physical distancing remain in place. These costs are within the limit previously agreed in Report 218/20.
- 6.6 Should any of the assumptions and estimates move significantly such that costs can no longer be contained within additional grant funding or the revised budgets, the position will be reported to the P&R committee for a decision on how any shortfall is proposed to be funded.

## 7. CONSULTATION

The Director of Finance, the Director of Infrastructure and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services were consulted in the preparation of this report.

**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:

- Report 179/20 – Recovery and Resilience – Steps for Angus Schools
- Report 187/20 – Recovery and Resilience – Education Current and Indicative Costs
- Report 191/20 – Humanitarian Assistance Angus Response (HAART) - Update
- Report 218/20 – Recovery and Resilience – Update on Education Recovery
- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- The Coronavirus Act 2020
- Educational Continuity Direction – 10 August 2020

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