

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** held remotely on Thursday 12 August 2021 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors RON STURROCK, JULIE BELL, KENNY BRAES, COLIN BROWN BEM, LYNNE DEVINE, ALEX KING, BEN LAWRIE, DAVID LUMGAIR, ANGUS MACMILLAN DOUGLAS OBE, BOB MYLES, GAVIN NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, LOIS SPEED, CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM and BETH WHITESIDE.

Church

Representatives: Mrs LESLEY HOOD and Mr ERIC SUMMERS.

Councillor STURROCK, Vice-Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Derek Wann, with Councillor Craig Fotheringham substituting. Apologies for absence were also intimated on behalf of Mr Mike Callaghan and Mrs Anna Cheyne, Teacher Representatives.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 May 2021 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

4. EDUCATION RECOVERY - RETURN TO SCHOOL ARRANGEMENTS – AUGUST 2021

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 May 2021, there was submitted Report No 237/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing an update on the steps taken to support the return to school following the 2021 summer holiday period.

The Report set out the key actions being taken in response to the latest Scottish Government guidance for schools and other important steps to support the return to school, including the support to children and families in relation to free school meals and the removal of charges for core curriculum and instrumental music tuition.

Having heard from the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning in relation to extra funding for staffing, and confirmation regarding current provision for music tuition, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the actions taken by the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate to support the return to school in August 2021;
- (ii) to request the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to bring further update reports to this Committee, detailing any other significant changes to the guidance and steps being taken to support Angus schools as required; and
- (iii) to note the removal of charges for core curriculum areas and instrumental music tuition.

5. EVALUATION OF THE REMOTE LEARNING OFFER

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 16 February 2021, there was submitted Report No 238/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing members with an evaluation of the remote learning offer available across all Angus schools during the periods when children and young people were learning at home.

The Report indicated that the Angus Virtual School had engaged with all primary and secondary school leaders to capture and analyse progress made in remote learning and to encourage professional dialogue around how best to utilise new skills and approaches. The remote learning guidance had provided benchmarks to evaluate the learning experience of all Angus children and young people during the second period of lockdown. Almost all schools had conducted surveys with their children and young people and parent groups, and a summary analysis of the survey data was used as part of the overall evaluation of remote learning. A summary of the findings were detailed, with the full position statement detailed in Appendix B to the Report.

The evaluation suggested that the learning offer across Angus Schools had improved in quality from the initial lockdown period. Staff had meaningfully reflected on what went well and what required improvement to better meet the needs of all learners. As a result, the Council was committed to the further development of a remote learning offer beyond the pandemic. Schools had reopened in full however, digital learning and teaching remained a key element of curriculum delivery. The Council would continue to work with colleagues to develop a Tayside-wide digital learning strategy.

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

- (i) to note the evaluation of the remote learning guidance;
- (ii) to note that all Angus primary and secondary schools provided a high-quality remote learning offer; and
- (iii) to note the 'next steps' planned to further develop Angus Council's remote and digital learning offer.

6. FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE FRAMEWORK COSTS REVIEW

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 17 November 2020, there was submitted Report No 239/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing an update on the additional costs incurred by the council's funded early learning and childcare (ELC) partner providers as a result of COVID-19 in 2020/21, and seeking approval to continue to provide financial support from 1 August 2021 until restrictions are ended.

The Report indicated that the hourly rates provisionally published for the second year of the framework, commencing on 1 August 2021, had been based on projected inflation of 2.7%. Actual inflation had now been confirmed at 2.1%, meaning that the council had the contractual option to apply a small reduction to the hourly rates that were provisionally published for 2021/22. However, it was proposed to forego the planned reduction in hourly rates paid to support funded ELC providers to continue with enhanced cleaning procedures even after the ending of COVID-19 restrictions in Scotland, without any requirement for providers to claim the costs from the council in arrears.

Further to the process implemented for providers to reclaim the additional, essential costs of delivering the service in line with COVID-19 safety measures, and as additional staffing costs were more difficult to predict and less likely to continue further into 2021/22, it was not recommended that compensation for those costs be incorporated into the agreed hourly rates for the year.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to forego the planned reduction in hourly rates paid through the funded ELC framework agreement in 2021/22, caused by lower than expected inflation; and
- (ii) to approve the continuation of a quarterly invoicing process for additional staffing costs incurred by contracted ELC providers in relation to COVID-19, which was subject to ongoing review in line with changing COVID-19 guidance from Scottish Government.

7. TAYSIDE PLAN FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES: ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21 AND REVISED PLAN FOR 2021/23

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 May 2021, there was submitted Report No 240/21 by the Depute Chief Executive seeking approval to submit the 2020-21 Annual Report to Scottish Government and to approve the revised Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2021-23.

The Annual Report 2020-21, as detailed in Appendix 1, highlighted the work undertaken against the five strategic priorities identified in the plan and the progress of each of the priority groups who were charged with delivering improvements in the area.

The new Tayside Plan had been developed concentrating on fewer priorities to ensure focused collaborative work however, the five key areas in the Plan remained the same. The actions had been refined to ensure that they were aligned to the collaborative approach and were being taken forward by the priority groups which had been established. An overview of the action plans for each group were detailed in the Appendices to the Report.

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

- (i) to approve the annual report on Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2020-21;
- (ii) to approve the revised Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2021-23;
- (iii) to request the Depute Chief Executive to bring an annual report to this Committee following the end of reporting period to March 2022; and
- (iv) to note the intention to publish both documents on the Tayside Regional Collaborative Website after 7 September 2021 to enable all relevant Tayside authorities to consider and approve the plan.

8. ANGUS ADOPTION AGENCY AND FOSTERING PANEL – ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of the Special Arrangements Committee of 23 June 2020, there was submitted Report No 241/21 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice advising members of the production of the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report.

The Report highlighted the Council's ability to provide an effective service for children, foster carers, kinship carers and adoptive parents and noted the demand on the resources, as well as services provided.

Having heard a number of members seek clarification on matters relative to the process, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to endorse the Angus Adoption Agency and Fostering Panel Annual Report, as appended to the Report;
- (ii) to support the future plans, as detailed within the Annual Report; and
- (iii) to note that the Report would be made publicly available on the Council's website.