

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** held remotely on Tuesday 21 September 2021 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors RON STURROCK, JULIE BELL, KENNY BRAES, COLIN BROWN BEM, LYNNE DEVINE, BILL DUFF, DAVID LUMGAIR, ANGUS MACMILLAN DOUGLAS OBE, IAN McLAREN, BOB MYLES, GAVIN NICOL, RONNIE PROCTOR MBE, LOIS SPEED and BETH WHITESIDE.

Church

Representatives: Mr ERIC SUMMERS.

Teacher

Representatives: Mr MIKE CALLAGHAN AND Mrs ANNA CHEYNE.

Councillor STURROCK, Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Brian Boyd, Alex King and Ben Lawrie, with Councillor Bill Duff substituting for Councillor King.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

3. MINUTES

(a) Previous Meeting

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 12 August 2021 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Staffing Sub-Committee

The minute of meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee of this Committee of 12 August 2021, a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX I**).

4. ANGUS INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S SERVICES CORPORATE PARENTING PROGRESS REPORT 2017-2021 AND ANGUS PROMISE PLAN 2021-2024

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 5 September 2019, there was submitted Report No 299/21 by the Depute Chief Executive presenting an update on progress made towards delivering the objectives of the 2017-2020 Corporate Parenting Plan which was extended to 2021; and also presenting a refreshed Corporate Parenting Plan (The Angus Promise Plan) for 2021-2024, taking account of national developments relating to The Promise. Members were also asked to assert their commitment to keeping the Angus Promise.

The Corporate Parenting Progress Report 2017-2020 (extended to March 2021) highlighted the work undertaken by corporate parents towards the six priorities in the action plan and the progress made on fulfilling the promises to care experienced children and young people.

The revised Angus Promise Plan had been developed together with partners of the Corporate Parenting Board and had been heavily influenced by the voices of local young people and the findings of The Promise.

At this stage of the meeting, the Committee heard from a number of young people with lived experience who wished to assert their own priorities following their own personal experiences.

Following a number of questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the Angus Corporate Parenting Progress Report 2017-2020, extended to March 2021;
- (ii) to approve the revised Angus Promise Plan 2021-2024; and
- (iii) to make a commitment to keep the Angus Promise by representing the needs of care experienced children and young people across the full range of work and offer support and challenge where there was a lack of understanding or respect of the issues faced by children, young people and families involved with the care system.

5. EDUCATION RECOVERY – USE OF COVID-19 STAFFING MONIES

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 18 May 2021, there was submitted Report No 300/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing an update on the expenditure of Covid-19 'recovery' funding for additional education staffing resource, which had been delegated to the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate.

A detailed overview of the use of the funding was outlined in Section 4 of the Report and a summary of cluster proposals was detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report.

Having heard from a number of members in relation to the use of the funding, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the use of the education recovery funding as outlined in Section 4 of the Report; and
- (ii) to request that the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning includes an evaluation of each of the funded initiatives in the session 2021-22 Annual Education Report.

6. EXPANSION OF FREE SCHOOL MEAL SUPPORT

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 20 May 2014, there was submitted Report No 301/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning providing members with an update on the expansion of universal free school meals to all children in primary 4 to 7, outlining the steps taken to date and plans for the next phases of the roll out.

The Report indicated that on 14 May 2021 Angus Council had received confirmation of the national plans to expand term-time universal free school meals to all children in primary 4-7. Confirmation was also received of the intention to extend free school meal support to include school holiday periods to all eligible primary and secondary children and young people in 2021/22. A phased implementation had been agreed nationally and was detailed in the Report.

Having heard a number of members seek clarity on the roll out, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the completion of the first two phases of the expansion, which had extended universal free school meal provision to all children in primary 4;
- (ii) to note the outline plans for phases three and four of the expansion, which would extend provision to all children in primary 5 from January 2022 and all children in P6 and 7 by August 2022; and
- (iii) to request the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to bring further reports during the current school year to update the Committee regarding progress and any additional financial implications.

7. CHILDREN'S SOCIAL WORK STATISTICS – OVERVIEW REPORT

There was submitted Report No 302/21 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice providing members with an overview of Angus Council performance data relating to annual statutory returns, which was the first overview report of this nature presented by the Children, Families & Justice Directorate.

Each year the Scottish Government collected and published data on Children Looked After, Child Protection and Eligibility for Aftercare services. The Report presented an overview of Angus Council performance against the key measures presented in the statutory datasets and outlined how Angus Council compared to other local authorities against a selection of local government benchmarking framework indicators.

Having heard a number of members welcome the production of the Report, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the overview of Angus statutory performance, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report; and
- (ii) to request the Director of Children, Families and Justice to present a report of statutory performance annually.

8. NATIONAL TRANSFER SCHEME – SECTION 69 OF THE IMMIGRATION ACT 2016

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 10 September 2020, there was submitted Report No 303/21 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice outlining changes to the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) announced by the UK Government on 10 June 2021 and the possible implications for Scottish Local Authorities.

At a COSLA Leaders meeting on 27 August 2021, it had been agreed that Scotland would participate in the Scheme with a commitment to take responsibility for the delivery of support for 45 unaccompanied asylum-seeking children per full cycle.

The agreement of the new Scheme to include Scotland had brought a requirement for members to further consider and agree a position on whether Angus Council would participate in the Scheme to enable the transfer of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children from entry local authorities struggling to support high numbers of young people. Participation in the transfer scheme continued to be voluntary but may become mandatory if not successful.

Having heard from the Director of Children, Families and Justice, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the national developments impacting on the lives of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the introduction of the revised National Transfer Scheme;
- (ii) to approve Angus Council's participation in the National Transfer Scheme as part of a national rota across Scotland;
- (iii) to authorise the Director of Children, Families and Justice to write to COSLA to confirm that Angus Council would participate in the National Transfer Scheme; and
- (iv) to approve the development of targeted supported lodgings provision and other services as required in anticipation of the arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children to ensure that the needs of children arriving as part of the Scheme were met.

9. IMPLEMENTATION - AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT (SCOTLAND) 2019

There was submitted Report No 304/21 by the Director of Children, Families and Justice advising members of developments relating to the Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 and the arrangements for local implementation of new duties.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 (The Act) had the effect of increasing the age of criminal responsibility (ACR) from 8 to 12 years and this aligned with the current minimum age of criminal prosecution in Scotland. Although the implementation date had not yet been confirmed, it was expected that the measures in The Act would come into force in October 2021, with partners working locally to put necessary arrangements in place.

Having heard from members in relation to 'places of safety', the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note and approve the operational changes as detailed in the Report ; and
- (ii) to note the assessed financial and operational implications of any further revision to the age of criminal responsibility in Scotland.

10. PLATINUM JUBILEE 2022 – EXEMPTION REQUEST

There was submitted Report No 305/21 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning requesting Committee approval to seek an exemption to the requirement to provide 190 days of schooling in session 2021-22 to enable celebration of the upcoming Platinum Jubilee in June 2022.

COUNCILLOR STURROCK, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR BROWN, MOVED THAT THE COMMITTEE AGREES:-

- (i) TO APPROVE THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING'S REQUEST TO SEEK AN EXEMPTION FROM SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FROM THE REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE 190 DAYS OF SCHOOLING IN SESSION 2021-22; AND
- (ii) TO APPROVE THE REQUEST FOR THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING TO HAVE ONGOING DELEGATED AUTHORITY TO MAKE SIMILAR REQUESTS IN FUTURE, SHOULD THEY BE REQUIRED FOR ANY REASON.

Councillor Duff, seconded by Councillor Bell, moved as an amendment, that the Committee agrees to approve the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning's request to seek an exemption from Scottish Government from the requirement to provide 190 days of schooling in session 2021-22 only.

On a vote being taken, the members voted:-

For the motion:-

Councillors Sturrock, Brown, Lulgair, MacMillan Douglas, McLaren, Myles, Nicol and Proctor (8).

For the amendment:-

Councillors Bell, Braes, Devine, Duff, Speed and Whiteside (6).

(Mr Summers, Mr Callaghan and Mrs Cheyne having left the meeting prior to the vote.)

The motion was declared carried and became the finding of the meeting.