ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of HYBRID MEETING of the **CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 19 September 2023 at 2.00 pm.

Present: Councillors LYNNE DEVINE, BRIAN BOYD, LINDA CLARK, DAVID CHEAPE, KENNY BRAES, IAIN GALL, ROSS GREIG, MARK McDONALD, GEORGE MEECHAN, LLOYD MELVILLE, GAVIN NICOL, LOUISE NICOL, CRAIG FOTHERINGHAM, LOIS SPEED, IAN McLAREN and BETH WHITESIDE.

Councillor DEVINE, Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Martin Shepherd, Chris Beattie, Julie Bell, Ronnie Proctor MBE and Derek Wann, with Councillors Boyd, Clark, Cheape Fotheringham and McLaren substituting respectively. Apologies for absence were also intimated on behalf of Mr Callaghan and Mrs Cheyne, both Teacher Representatives.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/STATEMENTS OF TRANSPARENCY

Councillor Meechan declared an interest in Item 5, Report No 257/23, as he was a kinship carer. He indicated that he would not take part in any discussion and voting and would leave the meeting during consideration of the item.

Councillor Cheape made a statement of transparency in relation to Item 4, Report No 256/23 in that his wife was an ASN teacher within Angus.

3. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 June 2023 was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

4. ANGUS EDUCATION REPORT 2022-23 AND UPDATE OF ANGUS EDUCATION PLAN 2022-27

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 20 September 2022, there was submitted Report No 256/23 by the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning presenting the annual education report and updated education plan, summarising the progress made against improvement priorities and outlining improvement priorities for 2023/24, and referencing the stretch aims over the next four years.

The Report provided a review of progress, together with a summary of work carried out in session 2023-2024 and an update to the Angus Education Plan (AEP) 2022 to 2027 against three themes, Angus Cares, Angus Learns and Angus Improves.

The proposed education plan highlighted planned improvement priorities for the period 2023-2024 and referenced the aims over the next four years. The priorities were represented using a 'logic model' and reflected the national and local context.

The Director of Education and Lifelong Learning introduced the Report, with senior officers providing an overview in relation to elements of the Report and Plan, and highlighting some of the significant pieces of work that they were leading last year.

Following questions and comments, and having heard members welcome the Report, and the Convener thank all the staff in all the settings, the Committee agreed:-

(i) to note the progress summarised in relation to the Angus Education Plan 2022 to 2023, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the Report;

(ii) having considered the proposed updates to the Plan and the Performance Report, as detailed in Appendices 2 & 3 to the Report, to approve the updates to the Angus

Education Plan 2022-2027, and implementation of the plan and its priorities, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the Report;

(iii)   to instruct provision of the approved Plan to Scottish Ministers, as required in terms of Section 3F(2) of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000; and

(iv)   to instruct the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to present an evaluation Report on progress with the Angus Education Plan to a meeting of this Committee in September 2024.

Having declared an interest at Article 2 above, Councillor Meechan left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

5.   SCOTTISH RECOMMENDED ALLOWANCE FOR KINSHIP AND FOSTER CARERS

There was submitted Report No 257/23 by the Director of Children, Families & Justice informing members of the new Scottish Recommended Allowance for eligible kinship and foster carers, which was agreed by the COSLA Leaders Group on 25 August 2023.

The National Review of Care Allowances reported in September 2018 made 12 recommendations aimed at improving the consistency and transparency of support for kinship and foster families. Within this, Recommendation 3 called for the Scottish Government and COSLA to consider a Scottish Recommended Allowance for children in kinship and foster care.

Allowances were currently provided by all local authorities to eligible carers. However, this was decided at a local level and so varied across Scotland. The introduction of the Scottish Recommended Allowance provided a recommended allowance that all local authorities must pay as a minimum, although they could also choose to pay more. This minimum level would be kept under review at a national level.

Following questions and comments, and having heard members welcome the Report, the Committee agreed: -

(i)   to note that additional funding from Scottish Government was being made available which was expected to be sufficient to cover the additional costs and on that basis, to endorse the COSLA agreement to implement the new Scottish Recommended Allowance for eligible kinship and foster carers in Angus;

(ii)   to require the Director of Children, Families and Justice to implement the Scottish Recommended Allowance and ensure that local rates were reviewed as required to ensure all eligible carers received at least the Scottish Recommended Allowance, subject to the receipt of confirmation of sufficient funding from Scottish Government;

(iii) to authorise the Director of Children, Families and Justice to implement back payment as necessary to ensure all eligible carers received the Scottish Recommended Allowance rate from 1 April 2023, subject to the receipt of confirmation of sufficient funding from Scottish Government; and

(iv)   to authorise the Director of Children, Families and Justice to undertake a review of the current Angus Council structure of allowances payable to kinship and foster carers to improve alignment with the national allowance structure with the outcome of that review being reported back to elected members for approval.