

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber, Council
Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells on Tuesday, 20
January 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Chairman - Education Business), S. Bell, C. Bhatia, J. Brown, M. J. Cook (from para.6), V. Davidson (from para.6), G. Edgar, J. Mitchell, D. Moffat (from para.2), D. Paterson, F. Renton, R. Smith.

Also Present:- Councillors G. Logan, S. Mountford, T. Weatherston.

Apologies:- Mr G. Donald (Education business).

In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive – People, Depute Chief Executive – Place, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson).

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Mr. J. Walsh, Mr. G. Jarvie.

CHAIRMAN

1. Councillor Aitchison chaired the meeting for that part which considered education business.

MINUTE

2. The Minute of the Education Executive of 25 November 2015 had been circulated and was approved subject to an amendment in that the Decision (b)(i) after paragraph 5 in relation to the Early Years Update should have read "AGREED that a further report be brought later in the new year....".

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman, subject to the correction above.

3. With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of 25 November 2015, the Depute Chief Executive (People) advised that an update on the implementation of the Asymmetric Week would now be considered by the Executive Committee in May 2015, to allow sufficient time for evaluation of the impact, including all comments received.

DECISION

NOTED.

4. With reference to paragraphs 4 and 5 of the Minute of 25 November 2015, the Depute Chief Executive (People) advised that a report on the Early Years Centre at Langlee would now be considered by the Executive Committee in May 2015.

DECISION

NOTED.

MEMBERSHIP

5. The Clerk to the Council advised that the Rev. Duncan McCosh had resigned as one of the Religious Representatives on the Executive (Education Theme) and a new Representative would be appointed following due process.

DECISION

(a) NOTED:-

- (i) the resignation of Rev McCosh with effect from 31 December 2014; and**
- (ii) that the vacancy would be filled as soon as possible.**

(b) AGREED to thank Rev McCosh for his contribution to the work of the Education Executive.

MEMBERS

Councillors Cook and Davidson joined the meeting during consideration of the following item of business.

SCHOOL ESTATE IN THE SCOTTISH BORDERS

6. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Depute Chief Executive (People) on the proposed development of a School Estate Strategy. The report sought agreement of the principles to be applied to future investment in buildings used to deliver services to Children and Young People. Scottish Borders Council invested around 31% of its Capital and around 47% of its Revenue expenditure in the development and maintenance of school buildings and other buildings used to deliver services to Children & Young People. Delivering significant projects like Kelso High School increased this expenditure to around 46% of its capital expenditure. As demand for these services increased and pressures on available budgets become more pronounced, Scottish Borders Council required a robust long-term strategy and ongoing processes to carefully and consistently consider all future investment in order to maximise the individual and educational outcomes for all children and young people. The report detailed the existing Estate related to the delivery of services to children and young people, the financial implications and the risks should a strategic approach not be agreed. In order to maximise investment in every child/young person (estimated numbers 14,821 at Aug 2014), Scottish Borders Council had to ensure that all spend on estates was in line with a wider investment plan as part of a long-term strategy. This would require the establishment of the key principles detailed in the report. Members asked questions in relation to whether there was a policy to replace secondary schools over primary schools, provision of a position statement, and timescales i.e. when would the Strategy be completed and when would it be brought back to Committee. The Committee was advised that while the condition of some primary schools needed to be considered, the School Estate Strategy would be looked at in light of the Education Strategy. A position statement was the first stage of developing the Strategy, with a condition survey of the school estate to identify specific issues. A balance would need to be established between maintaining current need and future need. Consultation would start now and it was hoped to have a progress report back to Committee in 6 months time. The School Estate Strategy was intended to be a 10 year strategy to dovetail with the capital budget plan. The issue of possible closure of schools no longer fit for purpose was raised and the Depute Chief Executive (People) advised that the purpose of the Strategy was about increased educational opportunities for children, which would take precedent over any changes to the school estate. The Chairman confirmed that there were no plans to close schools. Members also highlighted problems in some schools with windows, heating systems and poor toilets and sought and were given assurances that immediate remedial work in Schools would continue. Councillor Parker advised that it was helpful and appropriate to refresh the Schools Estate Strategy following on the capital investment the Council had made in schools over the last decade.

DECISION

AGREED that:-

- (a) Scottish Borders Council adopt a long-term strategic approach to the**

development and design of the School Estate;

(b) all options be considered in the development of the School Estate Strategy;

(c) the primary principles of 'maximising educational opportunities ' and 'improving individual outcomes' be considered in conjunction with the other principles of 'sustainability, ' affordability' and 'Future proof' throughout the School Estate Strategy; and

(d) a progress report on the development of the School Estate Strategy would be considered by the Executive Committee in Autumn 2015.

APPOINTING NEW REPRESENTATIVES FOR EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION)

7. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Depute Chief Executive (People) which updated the Executive Committee on the arrangements to elect new teacher and parent representatives for the Executive when it considered education business and requested Members to consider introducing new arrangements to enable a pupil representative to be elected to the Executive Committee. The report explained that the Scheme of Administration stated that there should be 2 teacher representatives on the Executive (one Primary and one Secondary), however there was only one existing representative. An expression of interest had been received to fill the teacher representative vacancy and it would therefore be appropriate to commence the process for seeking nominations for the second teacher representative. In relation to the Parent representatives, under the existing arrangements parent representatives were elected to the Executive for a period of 2 years and both of the existing parent representatives had completed this term and the process for seeking nominations for new parent representatives required to be commenced. There was a suggestion that the Teacher Representatives not be restricted to one from Primary and one from the Secondary sector, but this was not supported by the Committee.
8. There was currently no pupil representation on the Executive Committee and consideration required to be given to whether it was appropriate to introduce a process to seek nominations for the role. The report detailed the proposed election process. While Members supported the addition of pupil representatives on the Committee when Education business was being considered, it was felt that the election process proposed in the report was complicated and duplicated work undertake in relation to the pupil parliament. Following considerable discussion with regard to the most appropriate group from which to consider possible Pupil Representatives, the Committee agreed to Pupil Representative in principle, requesting officers consult a number of pupil groups and report back to the Committee.

DECISION

(a) **NOTED** the arrangements for electing new parent and teacher representatives for the Executive (Education).

(b) **AGREED:-**

- (i) in principle to propose having two Pupil Representative as non-voting members on the Executive Committee when it was considering Education business;
- (ii) that Officers consult with Senior Student Councils from each Secondary School, along with the current, and future candidates for, Borders Members of the Scottish Youth Parliament, to ascertain the most appropriate year Group and methodology for appointment as Pupil Representatives; and
- (iii) that the findings of that consultation be brought to an Executive Committee as

soon as possible.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS POLICY

9. With reference to paragraph 10 of the Education Committee Minute of 25 November 2014, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young people which set out a refreshed and revised Parental Involvement Policy for Scottish Borders Council replacing the existing Policy approved in 2006. The report explained that the updated Policy had come about as a result of a comprehensive piece of work involving teachers, parents and pupils and reflected the significant changes which had occurred in education since the original policy and the adoption of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006. The new Policy took into account the findings of an extensive self-evaluation exercise held in 2012 which looked at 'How well are parents involved in the life and work of our schools' and re-affirmed that when parents, carers and family members were effectively engaged in their children's learning, there was likely to be a positive impact on educational outcomes. In response to a question, Members were advised that compared to the previous draft version of the Policy, the current Policy had been made more concise and included clarification of wording.

DECISION

APPROVED the revised Parental Involvement in Schools Policy as set out in Appendix I to this Minute.

POSITIVE DESTINATIONS INFORMATION 2014

10. The Chief Officer Strategy & Policy for Children and Young people - Yvonne McCracken and the Opportunities for All Co-Ordinator (Emma Fairley) gave a presentation on Positive Destinations for school leavers in 2014. The presentation advised that in 2014 Scottish Borders was the 4th best local authority in Scotland in terms of achieving a positive destination for students (an improvement from 15th position in 2013). It was further highlighted that compared to national figures, a higher rate of Scottish Borders students entered higher education and further education and there was a lower rate of unemployed (seeking work). The presentation summarised Positive Destinations over the following categories; Higher Education; Further Education; Training; Employment; Voluntary Work; Activity Agreements; Unemployed Seeking; Unemployed (not seeking); and not known, with a total positive destinations of 94.2% compared to the national figure of 92.3%. These figures included children with disabilities, although that data was not recorded separately at national level. Emma Fairly spoke about her work with all secondary schools, including learning support and pastoral staff and Deputes, identifying from S3 onwards those pupils who were likely to need support in reaching positive destinations when they left school. Activity Agreements were offered to dis-engaged pupils as one to one for what the individual pupil needed at the time, and these Agreements helped them to overcome any outcome barriers e.g. housing, family issues, etc. These Agreements were voluntary, whereby pupils could drop out and come back, which other programmes did not offer. In response to a question about the 5.8% not accounted for in positive destinations, it was explained that Skills Development Scotland was not required to collect that data for Scottish Government and their destinations were therefore not known. In terms of students who had an initial positive destination and for whatever reason could not continue, all 16 -24yr olds were tracked and support offered through the Opportunities for All programme, with Skills Development Scotland dealing with those pupils who left higher education. Borders College was working in conjunction with Napier, Heriot-Watt and Queen Margaret Universities by

offering HNDs in the Borders, which would then allow students to transfer to 2nd and 3rd year in degree courses at University. The Chief Executive explained that significant progress had been made through the Community Planning Partnership with commitments from all partners to the Borders Young Persons Guarantee which aimed to offer all children a positive destination on leaving school, with looked after children being a priority.

DECISION

NOTED the significant progress made.

GLOW WEBSITE

11. Senior Education Officer – Christian Robertson, and Glow Development Officer – Stuart Brown, gave a demonstration on the Glow Website and highlighted the improvements to the application which had been re-launched in October 2014. Ms Robertson explained that GLOW had come into schools about 10 years previously but had not been well received at the time for a number of reasons. With the upsurge in social media, it had been re-launched as a totally different product. GLOW was the schools intranet across Scotland and allowed teachers and pupils to work and develop online. It was always intended that GLOW would be an education aid, and not education itself.

DECISION

NOTED.

The Education Business concluded at 12 noon and there followed a short adjournment.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

On the resumption of the meeting, Councillor Parker took the Chair for the remaining business.

MINUTE

12. The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 9 December 2014 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

13. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Neighbourhood Services which presented the Council's first Complaints Annual Performance Report in a format guided by the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) who required the Annual Report to be submitted to the SPSO and for the Council to publish the report. The report explained that following guidance from the SPSO (May 2012) on how to handle complaints, the SPSO in August 2014 requested that all Scottish Local Authorities present their annual performance on complaints in a publicly available annual report. The Complaints Annual Performance Report for complaints handled in 2013-14 was drafted to reflect the good practice as agreed with the SPSO. There were a number of areas for improvement in complaint handling and these were reflected in the Annual report. In response to a question raised by Members', it was explained that there was a separate policy for dealing with vexatious complainers. The Guidance provided for staff differentiated between a request for a service and a complaint about the length of time it had taken to obtain the service

requested. Further explanation was given in terms of each stage of a complaint and it was noted that capturing commendations could be improved. Members were keen that the Council learned from complaints, and wished to know what effect complaints had on Council business in terms of changes to Council services, as well as how they compared with other local authorities. The Service Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the detail of complaints was considered by the Council's Corporate Management Team on a regular basis, and undertook to look at what further information could be brought to Members and in what format. The Council did learn from complaints and it was intended to link these to the service and business planning process going forward. Further information would also be provided on the process of complaints received by Members and how these were recorded.

DECISION

(a) NOTED the performance of handling complaints, for the period 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014.

(b) AGREED:-

- (i) that the Annual report be made publically available via the Council website;**
- (ii) that the Complaints Guidance review detailed in paragraph 4.4 of the report be completed by the end of January 2015;**
- (iii) to the commitment to implement a complaints handling survey to improve reporting on customer satisfaction and that this be delivered as soon as possible, with the results available for the forthcoming 2014/15 Complaints Annual Performance Report in Spring/Summer 2015;**
- (iii) that the eight SPSO Performance Indicators as detailed in paragraph 4.3 of the report be included in the monthly/quarterly performance reporting to CMT and the Executive Committee; and**
- (iv) the benchmarking activity outlined in paragraphs 4.8 and 4.9 of the report be fully supported and any commitments agreed subsequently delivered.**

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME – GENERIC BUDGET

14. There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Strategy and Policy recommending an application for approval from the Community Grant Scheme generic budget. The application for approval had been submitted by Borders Community Radio and Media Ltd, based in Galashiels, but which covered the whole of the Scottish Borders, for a project grant to contribute towards the installation of broadcasting equipment as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report. The organisation provided a community radio which catered for a variety of listeners of varying ages and backgrounds. It promoted local businesses, charities and community groups in the Scottish Borders area and filled a medium for local TV coverage. The organisation had previously operated over the internet but had been successful in obtaining a Community Radio Licence to broadcast over FM. Following negotiations the organisation had secured suitable premises and required to install the necessary equipment to enable it to commence broadcasting in February 2015. The total project costs were £14,991 and the Committee were advised that an Awards for All grant in the sum of £9,991 had been successful. Members explored the voluntary aspect of the

Company, the benefits to the Community and heard about the Company's achievements to date.

DECISION

AGREED to approve a grant to the value of £5,000 to Borders Community Radio and Media Ltd, conditional on match-funding being achieved for the project.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.