

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held in Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells,
TD6 0SA on Tuesday, 7th November, 2017
at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison, C. Hamilton, S. Haslam, , W. McAteer , T. Miers, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, G. Turnbull, T. Weatherston.
Also present:- Councillors S. Bell, J. Fullarton, S. Marshall, C. Ramage
Apologies:- Councillor G. Edgar, E. Jardine, Mr I. Topping, Jeanette Aitchison, G. Jarvie
In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, Service Director Children and Young People, Chief Officer Education, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (F. Henderson).

1. **EARLY YEARS AND PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPIL PERFORMANCE MEASURES - SCHOOL SESSION 2016-2017**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young People which provided an update on performance in raising the attainment and achievement of children and young people in literacy, numeracy and health and well-being both locally and nationally for the school session 2016/17 and information on how key measures were continuing to develop. The report detailed the background, pupil performance in the broad general education, reported Performance Levels and Implications and outlined the next steps that were being taken at Regional, Local Authority and school level to continue to improve pupil performance. The Chief Education Officer gave a presentation and explained that broad General Education covered 4 levels from early Learning Childcare to the end of Secondary 3. There was a National expectation of progress although it was acknowledged that achievement may be earlier or later for some. She gave details of achievements at the various levels and advised that attainment in Scottish Borders Council across all stages and all subjects was consistently above the National Average. It was noted that these results were categorised as experimental statistics as it was an evolving picture. However, the levels of attainment within Scottish Borders Council were strong compared to national data, which would be released later in 2017, and evidenced improving levels of moderation and teacher judgement. Officers answered Members questions and it was noted that improved engagement with parents continued to be a goal. Methods of teaching both numeracy and literacy were being examined to see if they could be improved.

DECISION

NOTED the report.

2. **INSIGHT LOCAL BENCHMARKING MEASURES TO 2017**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young people which informed the Committee of trends in attainment and the achievement of Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 pupils in the Senior Phase in Scottish Borders using the 'Local Benchmarking Measures' from 2013 to 2017 from Insight the National Exam Comparator Data tool. The report explained that the Local Benchmarking measures provided data on pupils' achievements during the Senior Phase while they were still at school. Leavers' data would be available in the National dashboards on Insight in February. The attainment figures were based on the 'Latest and Best' achievement of young people in the Senior Phase and some early presentations in Secondary 3. In

Scottish Borders, the Council operated inclusive schools and there were some pupils who passed examinations at SCQF Levels 1 and 2, which were not included in the analysis as key benchmark measures, but were available in whole school subjects summary reports. The attainment of the most vulnerable pupils would be reported as a separate report to the Executive Committee in January 2018. The information and commentary in the report detailed the progress made by Scottish Borders pupils against the Virtual Comparator and the National Establishment (i.e. national average) by stage over the last five years for each Local Benchmarking measures. Figures were provided for both the National Establishment and the Virtual Comparator, but the Virtual Comparator was seen as the key benchmark for helping schools and Education Authorities understand their strengths and areas for improvement. The Virtual Comparator was made up of ten pupils from other Local Authorities around Scotland who had similar matching characteristics. This was matched by stage, gender, Additional Support Needs (ASN) and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). It was not an actual school, but a helpful statistical comparator. Local benchmarking measures were influenced by a school's curricular model/presentations policy. The local benchmarking data was detailed in the appendix to the report. The Chief Education Officer reported on other successes including highest number S4 young people attending the Schools Academy college programme; New Foundation Apprenticeship courses available in partnership with Borders College and the development of wider achievement awards such as leadership, employability and personal development. In response to a question about whether the Council faced any risks in terms of Teacher numbers, attracting specialist Teachers and in particular the National teacher shortage, the Chief Education Officer confirmed that a proactive approach was being taken to shortage of Teachers including the employment of NQTs, flexible contracts and the launch that evening of year 2 of the 'Grown your Own' initiative. It was noted that Scottish Borders were currently in the enviable position of having the lowest number of teacher vacancies in Scotland and it was hoped that this could be maintained. The Chief Education Officers response to a question in relation to positive destinations, explained what was available for pupils who chose not to further their education through University and advised that this data would be available in February.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the trends in attainment and achievement of Secondary 5 and Secondary 6 pupils :-**
- (b) **AGREED to recognise the significant improvement in the fifteen key measures of pupils' performance in national exams in 2017 compared to 2016, acknowledging the work of school staff, young people and the support of parents/carers in this achievement.**

3. EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE: EXPANSION TO 1140 HOURS

With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of 21 March 2017, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young People which sought approval of the Service Delivery and Implementation Plan (SDP) relating to the proposed expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for all three and four years and eligible two year olds from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year to communities across the Scottish Borders by the end of the parliamentary session 2020 (financial year 2020/21). The report explained that following Scottish Government Guidance, the Council's approach was Provider Neutral and would be in support of a Funding Follows the Child rationale, prioritising settings that were best placed to deliver quality outcomes for children and supporting the Council's ambition to close the poverty related attainment gap and support parents into employment, training or study. Parents would be able to choose locally from a range of ELC settings and providers where they wished their child to access their funded hours from within the context of a best value approach. The report specifically provided information on the rationale of the SDP and its contents; taking account of the key principles as outlined in 'A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland' and was underpinned by clear guiding principles of

Quality, Flexibility, Affordability and Accessibility. The SDP built upon the recommendations in a previous report relating to earlier phases of the ELC expansion of hours, the strategic approach to delivery and the identified communities now offering an 1140 ELC entitlement. Learning from the initial phases of the ELC expansion of hours was invaluable. The Service Director Children and Young People explained that this was a fantastic opportunity, with lots of ongoing and high quality preparation work taking place, it was provider neutral and offered blended opportunities, which would benefit childminders and partner providers. The challenges and next steps were highlighted. Members welcomed the flexible approach which would try to accommodate parental requirements. The focus on vulnerable families was also noted.

DECISION

- (a) APPROVED the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Service Delivery and Implementation Plan, associated project work and financial commitments at this stage;**
- (b) NOTED;-**
 - (i) the complexities and associated risks of planning for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare; and**
 - (ii) that the draft Early Learning and Childcare Service Delivery and Implementation Plan had been submitted to the Scottish Government, subject to Council approval, a one-to-one officer session with the Scottish Government Delivery Team would be held with the Local Authority in November 2017, to which any specific points could be raised.**
- (c) AGREED that an update on the progress of the SDP be brought back to the Executive in January 2018, including specific detail of what the ELC expansion would look like in communities in school session 2018/2019, including detail of capital projects.**

4. SCHOOL ESTATE REVIEW - NEXT STEPS 2017/18

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young People which provided an update on the work that was carried out in the School Estates Review from October 2016 to June 2017 and outlined the proposed next steps in the School Estates Review from October 2017 to June 2018. During the programme of work, the Council was recognised for delivering best practice in the manner in which the pupil, parent and community voice in Jedburgh was used to guide a consultation on learning provision in the town. The very successful outcome of Scottish Government partnership funding to deliver an Intergenerational Community Learning Campus with the Council had been instrumental in evolving the principles guiding the School Estate towards a holistic community approach, which was in line with the Council's developing approach to community empowerment and a focus on change and improvement being centred in localities. The success of the School Estates Review was very much linked within the level of engagement coming through from communities, who had become active in engaging with the Council on future proofing their estate and working jointly on specific challenges, as well as responding positively to opportunities. The School Estate strategy was a key strategy within the Council which could contribute significantly to the vision and priorities set out in the Council's "Connected Borders" Strategic Plan. The Service Director gave a detailed presentation on each of the proposals detailed in the report and answered Members questions. It was noted that with regard to Government funding they were looking for new builds rather than refurbishments but projects were looked at on a case by case basis. In response to a question on schools with falling rolls, the Service Director advised that a meeting had been held for all schools with less than 50 pupils. These schools had prepared action plans and some had been successful in increasing their numbers. In terms of St Margaret's Primary School, Hawick the proposal to close

the school was based on educational rather than cost grounds and there was a range of options for the continued provision of religious instruction for the children. With regard to the other RC schools it was noted that they were currently secure and new nursery provision was to be introduced at St Margaret's, Galashiels. Members discussed the proposals and agreed that the word "intergenerational" be removed from recommendation (d).

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to the change in the strategic principles guiding the School Estate Review, which now focused on delivering intergenerational learning opportunities and outcomes for all ages within a community;**
- (b) to note the positive response from the Scottish Government to the high quality consultation process carried out as part of the School Estate Review in Jedburgh;**
- (c) to note that a separate paper recommending the closure of the nursery, primary , secondary and specialist provision and the establishment of Jedburgh Intergenerational Learning Community had been progressed within the School Estate Review in the period 2016/2017;**
- (d) that a detailed assessment was carried out of the four High Schools that had not been rebuilt (Galashiels Academy, Hawick High School, Peebles High School and Selkirk High School) re their condition, suitability and capacity to prioritise the order of investment in the Secondary School Estate in the next ten to fifteen years; and that the outcome of the assessment was brought back to the Executive Committee, along with a proposal for consultation with the local community that came out first looking at community options for learning;**
- (e) to note from the assessment of the Primary School Estate that Earlston Primary School and Eyemouth Primary School were priorities for investment and agreed that work should be developed and ongoing with the Scottish Government around partnership funding to deliver intergenerational learning opportunities for both communities;**
- (f) that the programme of closing mothballed schools (Eccles/Leitholm Primary School, Ettrick Bridge Primary School and Hobkirk Primary School) continued with pace so that all schools were closed within the 2017/2018 period;**
- (g) to note the proposal to conduct a statutory consultation on the closure of St Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School in Hawick as an outcome of the Roman Catholic Schools Review as detailed in paragraph 6 below:**
- (h) to note the progress made by the Rural Schools Action Plans and commend the work of the parents;**
- (i) to note that, following engagement with parents/staff in Kirkhope Primary School, a proposal to extend the catchment would be consulted upon in January 2018; and**
- (j) to note that a review of the transport policy would be forthcoming in 2018.**

5. **JEDBURGH INTERGENERATIONAL LEARNING CAMPUS CONSULTATION OUTCOME REPORT**

With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of 6 September 2016, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young people which sought agreement to recommend to Council the proposal to build an Intergenerational Learning Campus in Jedburgh and formally close the Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Specialist Provision in Jedburgh, following the completion of a public consultation process as set out in the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (as amended). The report explained the following the completion of the statutory consultation, a Consultation Report in respect of the proposals was prepared and published on 16 October 2017. The Consultation Report was contained in Appendix 1 to the report. Consideration of this report was undertaken as part of the wider discussion on the School Estate contained in Paragraph 4 above.

DECISION

* **AGREED TO RECOMMEND to Scottish Borders Council that:-**

- (a) **an Intergenerational Learning Campus was built in Jedburgh;**
- (b) **Howdenburn Primary School was permanently closed;**
- (c) **Howdenburn Nursery was permanently closed;**
- (d) **Parkside Primary School was permanently closed;**
- (e) **Parkside Nursery was permanently closed;**
- (f) **Jedburgh Grammar School is permanently closed;**
- (g) **Howdenburn Schoolhouse was permanently closed with the educational support for secondary aged pupils with Additional Support Needs being transferred to the Intergenerational Learning Campus;**
- (h) **the policy regarding pupils from Ancrum Primary School transitioning to Parkside Primary School for Primary 6 and Primary 7 be amended to facilitate transition to the Intergenerational Learning Campus;**
- (i) **the primary school catchment zones be rezoned from Howdenburn Primary School and Parkside Primary School to the Intergenerational Learning Campus; and**
- (j) **the secondary school catchment zone be rezoned from Jedburgh Grammar School to the Intergenerational Learning Campus.**

6. **PROPOSAL FOR STATUTORY CONSULTATION TO CLOSE ST MARGARET'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL, HAWICK**

There had been circulated copies of a report by Service Director, Children and Young People which recommended that a Statutory Consultation was undertaken in relation to a proposal to close St Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School in Hawick. The report explained that as part of the School Estates Review, the Council had reviewed the denominational schools within the Scottish Borders considering: - increasing educational opportunities; improving outcomes for children and young people; sustainability; future proofing the school estate and affordability. The Review had highlighted a significant fall in roll at St Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hawick since 1997. The school was currently operating at 14% of capacity; with a current roll of 14 pupils. Given a sustained reduction in demand for denominational education within Hawick it was proposed that a Statutory Consultation commence in relation to a proposal to close St

Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hawick. The Children and Young People's Services team considered the proposal contained strong educational benefits for the children, which would provide greater opportunities for integration into their community and much wider learning experiences and greater opportunities in terms of the Curriculum for Excellence. Consideration of this report was undertaken as part of the wider discussion on the School Estate contained in Paragraph 4 above.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the position regarding the school roll at St Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hawick and the educational benefits associated with the proposal.**
- (b) **AGREED that a Statutory Consultation be undertaken in relation to the proposal to close St Margaret's Roman Catholic Primary School, Hawick.**

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Haslam took the Chair for the remaining business.

8. MINUTE

The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 17 October 2017 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

9. CAR PARKING ISSUES

With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of Scottish Borders Council held on 28 September 2017, the Chairman advised that in order to consider innovative solutions to the parking problems in the Scottish Borders it had been agreed that a Member Working Group be set up. She suggested that in order to gain a fresh perspective on this matter, the Working Group should, if possible, comprise newly elected Members and be chaired by Councillor Edgar as the relevant Executive Member. Councillor McAteer advised that Councillor Marshall had expressed an interest in being a member of the Working Group and although not a newly elected member, had not been a member of the previous Working Group. It was proposed that the Working Group should be made of seven Members with 4 from the Administration including Councillor Edgar and 3 from the Opposition groups

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) **that the Working Group comprise four Members from the Administration and three Opposition Members and be chaired by Councillor Edgar as Executive Member;**
- (b) **that the Groups should submit the names of those to be appointed to the Clerk to Council who would then arrange for the first meeting of the Working Group to be held.**

10. PRIVATE BUSINESS

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure

of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of part 1 of schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

11. **MINUTE**

The private section of the Minute of 17 October 2017 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.