

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells,
TD6 0SA on Tuesday, 26 February, 2019 at
10.00 am

Present:- Councillors C. Hamilton (Chairman – Education Business), S. Haslam (Chairman), G. Edgar, E. Jardine, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, R. Tatler, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston
Also present:- Councillors S. Marshall, W. McAteer, C. Penman and H. Scott
Apologies:- Councillor S. Aitchison
Absent:- Councillors T. Miers
In Attendance:- Chief Financial Officer, Interim Service Director Children & Young People, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling)

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Mr I. Topping, Ms C. Thorburn, Ms Alison Ferahi, Pupil Representatives: Mr M. Armitage, Mr L. Mendoza, Miss K. Ormiston.
Apologies:- Mr G Jarvie

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Hamilton chaired the meeting for consideration of the Education business.

INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATION BUSINESS

The Chief Officer Education gave an introduction to three presentations which focussed on four key priorities, which were also part of the national agenda, namely to raise attainment; narrow the poverty-related attainment gap; improve health and wellbeing in young people; and to develop employability and ensure positive destinations.

MEMBER

Councillor Rowley joined the meeting.

1. LITERACY AND NUMERACY UPDATE

Catriona McKinnon, was in attendance to give a presentation and update on the strategy for literacy and numeracy. Ms McKinnon explained that her substantive post was Head Teacher for Broughton and Newlands Primary School but she had been seconded to focus on leading developments in literacy and numeracy. The Scottish Government Vision for Education in Scotland included working towards excellence through raising attainment to ensure that every child achieved the highest standards in literacy and numeracy, set out within the Curriculum for Excellence levels. The rationale behind the development of a consistent strategy had been shaped by data from discussions and meetings with Clusters and secondary English and Maths teachers. Moving forward the collaborative work had been shaped by this data, keeping schools informed of progress via bulletins and updates at Head Teacher conferences. The data revealed that there was a particular need to look at attainment of literacy in Primary 1, recognising that early gains resulted in strong foundations that were built on as children moved through school. The multi-agency team working on this aimed for a 3% increase in attainment in P1 for this year and planning was taking place now for years 2 and 3. A draft strategy for literacy would be in place by April 2019, focussing on skills, professional learning, family learning and engagement, use of data and reading for enjoyment. The draft strategy for numeracy, also

to be in place by April 2019, was based on powerful practice informed by research. Strategy development included creating positive attitude to Maths, use of data, developing conceptual understanding, professional learning and pedagogical understanding. Ms Ferahi, parent representative, asked about parental involvement in the strategy and whether there was any focus on secondary schools. Ms McKinnon confirmed that, although there were currently no formal links with parents as part of the strategy, work with families was being enhanced and supplemented with the involvement of Community Learning and Development colleagues in strategy development. There were plans to extend work to secondary schools and there were collaborative training opportunities at Cluster level for Primary and Secondary School teachers. An example of a training development was the increased use of conceptual material, which research had shown to be an effective visual aid towards learning in numeracy.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

2. CLOSING THE GAP IN SCOTTISH BORDERS

In introducing his presentation, Attainment Officer, Mr Peter Macklin, explained that the purpose of the national drive for excellence and equity was to simultaneously pursue 'closing the gap' and 'raising the bar'. 'Closing the gap' was a shorthand expression for all of the work to interrupt the cycle of deprivation and the impact on children's progress and attainment. The Pupil Equity Fund facilitated data analysis, targeted support and a focus on literacy and numeracy in addition to health and wellbeing. Mr Macklin emphasised that there was no magic solution and that targeted researched intervention was required that was different for every child. Using a particular Primary School as an example, he gave a list of the type of interventions, supported by the Pupil Equity Fund, which had proved to be effective. As a result of these interventions in this school the gaps had been reduced by 33% in talking and listening, 22% in writing and 14% in numeracy. The presentation showed a further graph which illustrated the significantly positive impact of interventions funded by the Pupil Equity Fund in the Earlston Cluster. In fact the Earlston team's approach to closing the gap in numeracy was recognised nationally with a Quality Improvement Award. Other approaches for 'poverty proofing' in schools included looking at the cost of the school day; at a financially accessible school uniform at primary school; a nearly new rail; recycling events; and ensuring that cost was never a barrier to contributing to learning. The Scottish attainment challenge included a focus on pupils with care experience, looking in particular at attendance/exclusions/attainment and at ways to ensure positive destinations. In the ensuing discussion the Breakfast Club initiative was recognised as being effective in improving attendance and punctuality. In response to a question about the Council's proposed Digital Learning Transformation Programme, Mr Macklin maintained that the delivery of an iPad for every child from P6 to S6 would help to provide an equal learning platform and equality of opportunity for pupils.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

3. SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE

The Chief Officer Education, Ms Michelle Strong, presented slides and video clips to update the Committee on what had been achieved so far in the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC). Copies of the SEIC phase 2 Improvement Plan were provided at the meeting. Six Regional Improvement Collaboratives had been established across Scotland. The functions were to support and directly contribute to nationally and locally identified priorities with the overall objective of empowering teachers, parents, partners and communities to deliver excellence and equity for all children and young people. SEIC was a collaboration between five local authorities, namely East Lothian, Edinburgh, Fife, Midlothian and the Scottish Borders. The SEIC was uniquely diverse in terms of the range of schools and settings. Scottish Borders was by far the largest area geographically and over 70% of the population lived in rural areas or small towns. Conversely the region included Scotland's second largest city and three of the ten largest settlements in

Scotland. The SEIC Phase 1 Plan, based on data and shared vision, identified key priorities. Phase 2, from September 2018, set the direction of travel and contained more specific actions and smart targets to track progress in improvement outcomes. This work was being carried out by way of workstreams under six headings: quality improvement; equity; professional learning/leadership; maths/numeracy; data analysis; and emotional health and wellbeing. It was noted that emotional health and wellbeing was a priority issue and key to achieving other learning objectives. A number of key networks had been established within the SEIC which were generated through staff wishing to collaborate on a given theme. Networks were encouraged to be established where appropriate. Other collaborative activity included conferences; opening up events and opportunities; joint activity in the form of training; school reviews; moderation of standards; extending partnership working; connecting schools; and responding to ever-changing needs. The next steps were to empower practitioners and partners; share best practice; support and extend collaborative networks; and pursue partnership approaches. In a discussion of the presentation Members recognised the value of collaborative working to promote mutual support and learning across local authorities and to improve standards. The importance of parental involvement in SEIC workstreams was emphasised. The Service Director added that the SEIC aspired to work collaboratively with partner agencies and to encourage engagement of parents, families and communities to inform and support developments and to make a difference.

DECISION

NOTED the presentation.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Haslam chaired the meeting for the remainder of the meeting.

4. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting of 12 February 2019.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman

5. REVIEW OF PARKING ISSUES

The Chairman advised that this item had been withdrawn and would be discussed at a future meeting.

6. AFFORDABLE WARMTH AND HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY STRATEGY 2019 - 2023 CONSULTATION

- 6.1 With reference to paragraph 6 of the Minute of 2 October 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services seeking approval to begin public consultation on the draft Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy 2019 - 2023, which had been developed to support Local Housing Strategy Priority 2: 'More people live in good quality energy efficient homes'. The report explained that The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to develop Local Housing Strategies that aimed to ensure that, "so far as reasonably practicable, persons do not live in fuel poverty." This obligation related to housing in all tenures. The report highlighted that, under the current definition for fuel poverty, 34% of households in the Scottish Borders were fuel poor and 13% were extreme fuel poor. A diverse range of partners, stakeholders and housing experts had participated in developing the consultative draft Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy which covered the period 2019-23. Before the strategy was finalised it was important that local people, communities and other stakeholders had their say on whether these priorities would make a positive contribution to meeting the needs of people in the Borders.

- 6.2 Members welcomed the strategy and emphasised the priority of tackling fuel poverty. In response to a point made about ensuring, through building regulations, that new housing stock was up to standard in terms of energy efficiency, the Chief Planning Officer advised that building regulations were set nationally. He added, however, that new buildings were generally of a higher standard in this respect and that the Registered Social Landlords were at the forefront of the improvement agenda. It was a greater challenge to reach the private sector and to improve the thermal quality of existing housing stock. In particular, older rural properties in the private rented sector were hard to reach. Members were given more detail about how the consultation would be managed and assurance was given that this would include ways of engaging with the private sector. The Chief Planning Officer agreed with the suggestion to make available an easy-read Executive Summary, along with the full consultation document, to capture the key points and encourage engagement from the public.

DECISION

APPROVED a three month public consultation on the draft Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy 2019 – 2023, attached as an appendix to the report.

MEMBER

Councillor Mountford left the meeting.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor Turnbull declared an interest in the following item of business in terms of Section 5 of the Councillors Code of Conduct and left the Chamber during the discussion.

7. COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME - TEVIOT & LIDDESDALE BUDGET 2018/19

- 7.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Customer & Communities asking Members to consider a Community Grant Scheme (CGS) application from the Teviot & Liddesdale budget. The application had been brought to the Executive Committee for consideration as the local Ward Members could not reach a decision which had more than 50% support. The report explained that Teviot & Liddesdale Community Grant Scheme 2018/19 budget had £14,442.50 remaining. The application was from Hawick Reivers Association (HRA) which organised and managed an annual festival in Hawick based on the theme of Borders Reivers. The festival was established in 2005. The request for £5,000 was to purchase 9 gazebos and tables which would be used by stall holders participating in the Hawick Reivers Festival street market. The total cost of purchasing the equipment was £5,611.45. Gazebos would be available for use by other community groups outwith the festival weekend. The report explained that HRA successfully applied to the Community Grant Scheme for £5,000 in 2017/18 for the purchase of 10 gazebos, making a total of 15 owned by the Association. Whilst HRA had demonstrated that the gazebos were well used in the community, the number of gazebos HRA currently had was enough to satisfy demand from other community groups and accommodate the festival stall holders when used alongside the additional gazebos they were able to source from other towns / groups. The report's recommendation was to not approve a grant of £5,000 to Hawick Reivers Association.
- 7.2 Members expressed some discomfort at being asked to consider this application, believing that the decision should more justifiably be made by local Members with local knowledge. However, as in this particular case a decision could not be reached by local Members, they proceeded to discuss the application. In doing so they placed significant weight on the advice and recommendation provided by officers within the report. Members noted that, in addition to the grant of £5,000 from the Community Grant Scheme in 2017/18, HRA had also secured £3,000 from Hawick Common Good Fund in 2017/18 and 2018/19 to help cover running costs of the festival. They recognised the value of the weekend festival in attracting local, national and international visitors and it was suggested that officers be tasked to assist HRA to work towards a more financially sustainable model for future years.

VOTE

Councillor Edgar, seconded by Councillor Rowley, moved to support the report's recommendation not to give a grant of £5,000 to Hawick Reivers Association.

Councillor Weatherston, seconded by Councillor Tatler, moved as an amendment that, being mindful of the split decision of local Elected Members, a grant of £2,500 be given to Hawick Reivers Association, this being half of the amount requested.

On a show of hands Members voted as follows:-

*Motion - 5 votes
Amendment - 2 votes*

The motion was accordingly carried.

DECISION DECIDED

- (a) not to approve a grant of £5,000 to Hawick Reivers Association; and**
- (b) to ask officers to support HRA to work towards a more financially sustainable model.**

8. PRIVATE BUSINESS

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

9. MINUTE

The private Minute of 12 February 2019 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am