

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, 8 October, 2019 at
10.00 am

Present:- Councillors C. Hamilton (Chairman – Education Business), S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison, G. Edgar, E. Jardine, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, R. Tatler, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston.
Also present: Councillors S. Bell and E. Thornton-Nicol.
Absent:- Councillor T. Miers.
In Attendance:- Interim Service Director Children and Young People, Service Director Regulatory Services, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling)

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Mr G. Jarvie, Parent Representative: Ms Alison Ferahi
Apologies:- Mr. I .Topping.

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Hamilton chaired the meeting for consideration of the Education business and welcomed everyone to the meeting, making particular reference to the young pupils from Ayton Primary School.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chairman varied the order of business as shown on the agenda and the Minute reflects the order in which the items were considered at the meeting.

2. RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS - GOLD AWARD - AYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People proposing that Scottish Borders Council commend Ayton Primary School for receiving the Gold Rights Respecting Schools Award. Four pupils from the school gave a very well received presentation about how the award had been achieved, giving examples of associated work and activities carried out. The report explained that the award was granted by UNICEF UK following an accreditation visit to the school in June 2019. Ayton Primary School had explicitly adopted a child rights approach based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and had embedded this in school policy, practice and culture. The senior assessor from UNICEF UK had highlighted key strengths, including: a very supportive, caring and nurturing learning environment underpinned by a respect for all members of the school community; and articulate and confident pupils who were proud of their school and rights respecting work. Children across the school also understood how local and global issues and sustainable development were linked to rights. They understood their responsibilities in maintaining high standards across all aspects of school life. Members commended the school for achieving the award and congratulated the pupil representatives for their excellent presentation, giving them a round of applause.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **continue to support Ayton Primary School to sustain their focus on children's rights; and**
- (b) **encourage Ayton Primary School to share their journey with other schools within Scottish Borders.**

3. **EYEMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL GAINING AN EXCELLENCE IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AWARD FROM GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR SCOTLAND**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People proposing that Scottish Borders Council commend Eyemouth High School for gaining an Excellence in Professional Learning Award from the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Eyemouth High School Headteacher, Robin Chapman, was in attendance to present the report and he explained that the GTCS set the standard for the Award, which was held for a three year period. The Award recognised the central role that leadership at all levels played in creating and sustaining a professional learning environment where teacher professionals could flourish and bring about sustained impact on learning and learners. He added that, from when the scheme first started three years ago three schools, from the total of 22 receiving the Award in the whole of Scotland, were from the Scottish Borders, Kelso High School having been named last year and Earlston and Eyemouth High Schools this year. With reference to a paper handed out at the meeting, Mr Chapman summarised the difference made by the National Model of Professional Learning which had been developed following research into effective learning. The model fell into three main parts: learning as collaborative; learning that deepened knowledge and understanding; and learning by enquiry. He gave examples of how these different areas were approached within the school's learning community. In conclusion Mr Chapman believed that this was the most transformational development that the school had carried out. He responded to questions about how teachers were persuaded to effectively engage at the start of the process and how new teachers were integrated into the professional learning culture. He explained that a core group of enthusiastic staff were involved at the start and that this group built on their success to the extent that all staff wanted to engage and be included. It was recognised that newly qualified staff could bring in new ideas and some of the newer teachers were in fact leading the processes. In terms of rolling out the model to other schools, Mr Chapman explained that a recent event held to share good practice and ideas was attended by representatives from all Scottish Borders secondary schools and two representatives from schools outwith the Borders. As a further initiative his colleague and Depute Headteacher, Bruce Robertson, had been seconded to Council Headquarters to assist in the development of the model in other schools. Members thanked Mr Chapman for his attendance and congratulated him on the award.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **continue to support Eyemouth High School to sustain the professional learning culture which had developed within the school; and**
- (b) **encourage Eyemouth High School to share their learning across other schools within the Scottish Borders.**

4. **EXAM RESULTS 2018/19**

- 4.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children & Young people providing Members with information on progress schools were making in the Broad General Education for P1 to S3 and Senior Phase S4-6 Scottish Qualifications Examinations for session 2018/19. Quality Improvement Officer, Catherine Thomson, conveyed the key messages from the detailed information provided and contained in tables within the report. Also included in the report were identified areas for improvement. An explanation of the SCQF Framework was attached as an appendix. Ms Thomson explained that in 2018/19 all areas of Literacy and Numeracy in the Broad General

Education at P1, P4, P7 and S3, apart from Second Level Numeracy, were above 76% and in particular Listening and Reading were above 86%. For session 2019/20, all schools would be set new targets in Literacy and Numeracy to ensure that Scottish Borders met the Scottish Government's stretch aim of 85% for 2020. It was noted that the Senior Phase SQA exam results did not include the wider achievement awards, which were on the SCQF qualifications framework at the same level, attained by young people during the last session. The Education Service would give a further update to the Executive Committee on attainment and achievement in March 2020 when all the data would be available. In terms of SQA National Qualification attainment in 2019, 77.9% achieved A-C in National 5, 76.5% achieved A-C in Higher and 82.3% achieved A-C in Advanced Higher. These were 1.3%, 1.7% and 2% above the A-C pass rates respectively achieved in 2018. The overall pass awards showed a consistency in trend or a small improvement in each award. 96.1% of S4 achieved a National 5 English award which remained in line with 2018. 83.3% of S4 achieved a SCQF National 5 award in Maths which was a decrease from 2018 but higher than in 2017. This year's SCQF Higher results demonstrated an extremely positive trend with the percentage of young people gaining an award at Higher increasing to 91%. Ms Thomson drew attention to other courses being offered at Senior Level in some schools. These included a foundation apprenticeship in Social Services and new courses such as Bee Keeping and Musical Theatre. The report went on to provide detailed information and data tables on closing the Poverty-Related Attainment Gap. The Pupil Equity Fund had been effectively used in all allocated schools to support targeted interventions in Literacy and Numeracy for identified groups of children and young people.

- 4.2 In conclusion Ms Thomson advised that a data analysis of SQA exam results was now underway in preparation for the release of the Scottish Government Insight benchmarking tool. This would be used by senior officers to analyse each secondary school's attainment data and to identify success and areas for improvement. Schools would then do their own detailed analysis. Members welcomed the achievements outlined in the report. In response to a question from Ms Ferahi about how data was recorded and specifically whether a gap year was recorded as a negative destination no matter for what reason it was being taken, Ms Thomson explained that a gap year could be seen as a positive destination but it was sometimes difficult for Skills Development Scotland to obtain the correct information. In terms of the requirement to improve numeracy at certain levels which was identified from the data and whether this was due to difficulty in recruiting Maths teachers, Ms Thomson advised that improving numeracy and the recruitment of Maths teachers was a challenge nationally and this was not a reflection of teaching in the Borders. The team would be focussing on moderation across schools to bring about improvement. In response to a further question Ms Thomson confirmed that some of the clusters had shared tracking systems through Primary and Secondary and that last year a system had been put in place to track every year group through primary to provide more robust data. More work was required to be carried out in this area to inform moderation between Primary and Secondary schools.

DECISION

NOTED the trends and progress that schools were making in the Broad General Education and Senior Phase in terms of attainment and the identified areas for improvement.

5. EDUCATION SERVICE PROGRESS REPORTS AND NEXT STEPS

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children & Young People, on progress made by the Education Service and schools during 2018-19 and to note the improvement priorities for 2019-20. Michelle Strong, Chief Officer Education, highlighted the main points of the two reports which were attached as appendices to the covering report and which were publicly available. The Standard & Quality Report, attached as Appendix A, was an evaluation of academic session 2018-19 and drew on a range of data to support its conclusion. The report celebrated improving attainment levels, increased positive destinations, reduction in school exclusions and high

attendance rates. There continued to be a strong focus on reducing inequities and tackling poverty with enhanced supports provided as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund. Ms Strong drew attention to the vision and the three strategic priorities: improving learning in literacy, numeracy and secondary curriculum; inclusion; and partnerships. The priorities were aligned to those outlined in the National Improvement Framework. The report described the progress made within each of these priority areas and the next steps identified for continuous improvement. The Improvement Plan was a statement of objectives for academic session 2019-20 and was attached as Appendix B. This education plan sat as part of the wider Children's Services Plan and other strategic planning across the Council. The plan focussed on improving learning and teaching; developing inclusive practices; and enhancing partnerships to support family learning. Both documents evidenced a strong commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people in the Borders and their families. The work of the Education Service and schools over recent years had had a strong emphasis on improving experience and achievement of our most vulnerable children and young people. Further information was provided by Ms Strong in response to questions. She explained that two Quality Improvement Officers would focus on being in schools and facilitating high quality professional learning for teachers, practitioners and support staff. In terms of school leadership, a strategic plan would be developed to build a Leadership Academy for the Scottish Borders over the next 5 years. With regard to engagement with parents it was recognised that more was required than simply information sharing. A new Quality Improvement Officer, recruited through the South East Improvement Collaborative, had a remit to develop family learning through work with schools and the parent body. Members welcomed the reports and thanked Ms Strong, Ms Robertson and team, in recognition of the huge amount of work involved in producing them.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) **to note the Standards & Quality Report 2018-10 and Education Improvement Plan 2019-20, attached respectively to the report as Appendices A and B;**
 - (b) **to acknowledge the success and drive for continuous improvement; and**
 - (c) **the next steps.**
6. **ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**
There had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director Children & Young People seeking endorsement of the first framework – Achieving Excellence in Learning: Quality Improvement Framework. Christian Robertson, Quality Improvement Manager, presented the report and explained that the Quality Improvement Framework encapsulated the information received in the previous reports. In August 2017, statutory guidance for Local Authorities was updated by Scottish Government. The Quality Improvement Framework served as a platform for Scottish Borders Council officers to ensure that all schools provided an efficient and effective education in accordance with these statutory duties. Scottish Borders Council was committed to the delivery of a high quality education service for children and young people. The vision was to embed a culture of continuous improvement which ensured children and young people were achieving best possible outcomes. Achieving Excellence in Learning was the Council's strategy to raise attainment for all. The strategy would consist of six key frameworks: Learning and Teaching; Literacy; Numeracy; Learning Together; Inclusion; and Quality Improvement. Each of these frameworks was informed by data, research and strategies known to be successful in raising attainment. The Quality Improvement Framework sought to support and enable Headteachers to take responsibility for and to be accountable for their own improvement journey, whilst ensuring that the statutory duties of the Local Authority were fully embedded within the Framework.

DECISION

AGREED to endorse the first Framework in the series – Achieving Excellence in Learning: Quality Improvement Framework.

CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

This was the last meeting of the Education-themed Executive on which Ms Ferahi and Mr Jarvie would serve as representative members. The Chairman thanked them for their attendance, support and valuable contribution to the Committee.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

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

7. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting of 17 September 2019.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

8. PROPOSED USE OF SECOND HOMES COUNCIL TAX FUNDING BUDGET TO ASSIST ETRICK AND YARROW COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY DELIVER AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT KIRKHOPE STEADING, ETRICKBRIDGE .

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services seeking approval to use available Second Homes Council Tax funding to grant assist Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development company towards the costs of the proposed conversion of the Kirkhope Steading, Ettrickbridge, to form 5 affordable homes for mid-market rent, and business units for lease. The Service Director explained that the Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company were exploring external funding applications to progress their project which involved the conversion of the redundant Kirkhope Steading, Ettrickbridge. The main source of grant funding being sought by the Company was the Scottish Government's Rural Housing Fund. The current estimated total costs of the proposed housing element of the steading conversion was £696,000. In order to meet this, the Company was understood to be progressing grant applications for £390,000, and loan of £306,000. It was understood that the Rural Housing Fund were encouraging the Company to lodge a Planning Application as a precursor to considering a formal grant application. A grant of up to £13,000 was required to cover consultant costs and planning fees. This could be met from available uncommitted funding held in the Council's Second Homes Council Tax budget. It was considered that the proposed grant was consistent with use of this budget and may enable the company to secure additional housing investment funding to meet total project costs. In the ensuing discussion and after receiving answers to their questions, Members were keen to support the proposal. It was suggested that this was a model that could be pursued in other rural locations for the development of small clusters of housing and agreed that, if successful, a case study be prepared to share and potentially initiate further similar projects.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to grant assist Ettrick and Yarrow Community Development Company up to £13,000 towards costs of Planning Application Fees to support external funding applications to provide 5 affordable homes for mid-market rent. It was proposed that the Council's grant would be funded from the Second Homes Council Tax Budget available balance.**
- (b) that if successful, a case study be prepared to share and potentially initiate similar projects in other areas.**

The meeting concluded at 11.25 am