

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, 24 May, 2016 at 10.00
am

- Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Chairman - Education Business), C. Bhatia, J. Brown, V. M. Davidson, G. Edgar, J. G. Mitchell, D. Moffat, D. Paterson, F. Renton and R. Smith
- Also present:- Councillor I. Gillespie.
- Apologies:- Councillors S. Bell, M. J. Cook; Mr G. Donald, Mr J. Walsh.
- In Attendance:- Depute Chief Executive – Place, Corporate Transformation and Services Director, Service Director Children and Young People, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Mr. G. Jarvie, Mrs J. Aitchison, Ms A. Ferahi, Miss E. Page.

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Aitchison chaired the meeting for the education business. Prior to commencement of the agenda items he welcomed three P5 children from Knowepark Primary School, Selkirk, along with their teacher, to tell the Committee about their success in the competition organised by Sinclair Duncan to design a tartan scarf for 'Cash for Kids'. The girls described how they selected from up to eight colours and put together the tartan designs, one of which was the winner and the other two runners-up in the competition. The three successful 'Cashmere for Kids' designs, displayed in frames, had been brought along for Members to see, as was an actual cashmere scarf made up from the winning entry. All profits from scarves made up in 100% cashmere from the winning design would go to Cash for Kids. Members congratulated the pupils on their success.

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.

MEMBER

Councillor Davidson joined the meeting before consideration of the following item.

2. PRESENTATION - UPDATE ON ONLINE PAYMENTS FOR SCHOOLS

Senior Manager Business Strategy and Resources, Jason McDonald, gave an update on progress on online payments for schools, by way of a presentation. Project Manager Stephen Fotheringham was also in attendance to provide further information. Mr McDonald firstly referred to the Scottish Borders Council's ambition with regard to online payments for schools which reflected the national objective to roll out the system across Scotland. In addition to old processes being time consuming for staff and parents, online payments facilitated improved service; they reduced the requirement for students to carry

money and provided for greater anonymity in the provision of free school meals. The project had been introduced in October 2014 and rolled out in 4 phases. Progress was monitored carefully after each phase before a decision was taken to launch the next phase. This allowed any issues to be resolved and lessons to be learned. The objectives were to improve customer experience; reduce cash and cheque handling in schools; reduce administration time on meals and school trips; and to increase catering revenue. With regard to accessibility, there were alternatives for families without internet access to ensure that no families were excluded. The objectives had largely been met and Scottish Borders Council was now the first Council in Scotland to provide online payments across all schools. Other successful outcomes included increased parental choice; parental approval and good parental engagement through payment for a range of services including trips, activities, uniforms and photographs. The system had also resulted in increased social inclusion. Activation rates had been in excess of 84% across all schools with some schools achieving 100%. Significant savings in manual cash handling and administration left more time for higher value tasks. In a discussion of the presentation Mrs Aitchison wholeheartedly endorsed the system from a parent's point of view and Members welcomed the positive outcomes of the project noting that it had been very well received. The Chairman congratulated the project team.

**DECISION
NOTED:-**

- (a) the positive outcomes of the online payments for schools project;**
- (b) that administration processes would be streamlined; and**
- (c) that a monitoring report would be brought back on:-**
 - (i) the performance of the automated system including activation rates;
and**
 - (ii) accessibility for all families.**

3. ECCLES/LEITHOLM PRIMARY SCHOOL

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People proposing changes to the status of Eccles/Leitholm Primary School in that it was proposed that the school be mothballed for a temporary period and that the decision to do so be reviewed within 12 months. The report outlined the background to the falling pupil roll at Eccles/Leitholm Primary School, leaving 3 pupils at the school for school session 2016/17. Arrangements for accommodating the pupils within other Scottish Borders schools were described and included transport, staffing and the educational and social benefits to be achieved through the process. The Service Director drew Members' attention to the section of the report which referred to the School Estates Review. During the pre-consultation for the Review the Council had engaged with school communities which currently had a pupil roll of less than 20 pupils regarding future sustainability. The intention was for the Council to intervene at an early stage, should there be a prediction of falling rolls. These ongoing discussions would be represented within the report going to Council in June 2016. In the ensuing discussion Members recognised that the situation at Eccles/Leitholm was a sad reflection of the changing age profiles in many rural areas. Parent representative, Mrs Aitchison, urged the Council to undertake early engagement with schools which had rolls of less than 50 pupils as she believed there could be other schools under threat in that size category. Members recognised that school rolls could fall at an alarming rate creating a downward spiral, if parents felt their children's learning experiences started to be affected by the size of the school. The Service Director stressed that there would be further engagement during the Summer on proposals relating to the School Estates Review when all comments would be picked up about provision within a locality. She had noted in responses to the pre-consultation that the

public commented on the need to rationalise provision in terms of the number of schools whilst recognising the importance of rural schools.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- * (a) **to recommend to Council that Eccles/Leitholm Primary School be mothballed with immediate effect for a temporary period;**
- (b) **to review the status of the school within the next 12 months; and**
- (c) **in the interim to provide transport to Coldstream Primary School for any new pupils who moved into the existing catchment of Eccles/Leitholm area.**

4. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS PROVISION IN EARLSTON

With reference to paragraphs 4 – 7 of the Executive Committee meeting of 13 May 2014, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People informing Members of the preparation work which would now be carried out in advance of the opening of the Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision in Earlston. The Service Director, Mrs Manson, provided a summary with the aid of presentation slides. She referred firstly to Scottish Borders Council's existing and continuing ASN provision through Broad General Education (2 years to end of S3) and the Senior Phase (S4 to beyond school), identifying the schools with enhanced provisions. There was a presumption of mainstream education for children with additional support needs and Mrs Manson stressed the importance of an individualised approach for every child. With the aim of high quality "inclusion for all" there needed to be the right environments both in mainstream and ASN provision. The Council had to have both high quality universal school provision and specialist provision able to meet the learning, support and care needs of children with complex needs. The key areas for consideration in taking forward the "inclusion for all" commitment were summarised in the report. In 2013 Scottish Borders Council had identified the need to develop a full time purpose built specialist education and care centre for young people with complex needs, both physical and learning within Scottish Borders. The aim of the additional provision was to offer a service that would reduce the number of children who accessed very specialist provision out of the Scottish Borders as well as providing an enhanced level of provision for our children with the most profound and complex needs. The provision would initially be for primary aged children currently attending the existing provisions in the autistic spectrum classes at St Ronan's and at Wilton Primary School but would also provide for those children who may have complex sensory impairments. Mrs Manson highlighted the educational and well-being benefits of having this specialist provision. The design of the proposed purpose built centre was described in the report and visual images attached to the report as appendices. A 3D model of the building and display boards had also been brought to the meeting for Members to examine. Having regard to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 full engagement with stakeholders would take place in May and June 2016 with families, children and staff, the school communities involved and the Earlston community. The naming of the new provision would also be considered as part of an informal consultation. A report would then be brought back to the Executive Committee in August 2016 with relevant formal statutory consultation papers. Members welcomed the report and the progress in relation to the additional ASN provision and received answers to their questions. Mrs Manson agreed that there was an opportunity to enhance the project through additional creative fundraising. There was also a real opportunity for inward investment in terms of provision of placements for children from outside the Scottish Borders. In response to a further question Mrs Manson stressed that this was additional provision and was not replacing existing ASN provision. In respect of children with complex needs receiving more support from the additional provision there would be flexibility in the staff resource which would move with the child. The Chairman commended the staff for the work carried out on the project.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED:**
- (i) that the Additional Support Needs (ASN) provision in Earlston was expected to open in January 2017;
 - (ii) the continuation of the following ASN provisions in the Scottish Borders:

Nursery/Primary Age Enhanced Provision:

1. Early Learning and Childcare ASN Provision in Langlee;
2. Teviot Primary Complex Needs Provision situated in Wilton Primary School;
3. Eildon Primary Complex Needs Provision situated in Langlee Primary School;
4. Berwickshire Primary Complex Needs Provision situated in Chirnside Primary School (to be housed in the new Duns Primary School provision);
5. Tweeddale Primary Complex Needs Provision situated in Halyrude Primary School.

Secondary Age Enhanced Provision:

6. Teviot Secondary Complex Needs Provision situated in Hawick High School;
7. Eildon Secondary Complex Needs Provision situated in Galashiels Academy;
8. Berwickshire Secondary Complex Needs Provision situated in Berwickshire High School;
9. Tweeddale Secondary Complex Needs Provision situated in Peebles High School;
10. Howdenburn Schoolhouse, Jedburgh.

- (b) **AGREED to:**
- (i) informal engagement from May 2016, which would share the opportunities the Earlston provision presented, with:
 1. children with profound and complex needs and their families;
 2. the community of Earlston and the school communities of Earlston Primary School and Earlston High School; and
 3. staff groups.
 - (ii) informal engagement with the stakeholders above regarding the naming of the provision in Earlston; and
 - (iii) bring forward relevant formal statutory consultation papers in respect of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 to the Executive Committee in August 2016 regarding:
 1. the relocation of the existing provision of spectrum classes in Innerleithen Primary School and Wilton Primary School grounds; and
 2. the establishment of the new provision in Earlston.

ADJOURNMENT

The Chairman adjourned the meeting at 11.20 am to give Members the opportunity of viewing the model and display boards for the proposed building at Earlston. The meeting reconvened at 11.45 am.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

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

5. MINUTE

The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 10 May 2016 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

6. COMMUNITY GRANT SCHEME - GENERIC BUDGET 2016/17

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Executive recommending three applications for funding from the Community Grant Scheme (CGS) Generic Budget. The applications recommended for approval were:-

- (i) Heads Together who made a request for a support grant of £1,500 to part fund the increased rental costs of the relocation to new premises. Heads Together was a Borders- based charity providing support for people who were suffering the effects of brain injury:
- (ii) Borders Water Rescue Team applied for a contribution of £5,000 towards the total cost of £48,944 for the purchase of a fully adaptable 4 x 4 emergency response vehicle; and
- (iii) Borders Islamic Society with a grant request for £4,270 as a contribution to the start-up costs of £6,120 for a small Family and Community Centre to provide a range of new services. The Borders Islamic Society was a registered charity with aims that included the provision of services and activities to the Muslim community.

The total budget available for 2016/17 was £12,032 and the total value of grant requests was £10,770. After receiving some additional information from the Funding and Project Officer about the organisations concerned, Members supported the applications. With regard to the support grant to Heads Together it was agreed that this be subject to the group ensuring it could meet the full costs of rental from Year 2.

DECISION

AGREED to approve grants to the value of:-

- (a) **£1,500 to Heads Together, on condition that the organisation revised its fundraising plans to bridge this gap in future years;**
- (b) **£5,000 to the Borders Water Rescue Team, on condition that it secured the required match funding; and**
- (c) **£4,270 to the Borders Islamic Society.**

7. **SYNTHETIC PITCH PROGRAMME - PEEBLES 3G PROJECT**

With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 29 September 2015 there had been circulated copies of a report by the Corporate Transformation and Services Director proposing that the planning application for the proposed 3G Pitch at Victoria Park in Peebles (15/01460/FUL) be withdrawn. The report explained that there had been significant issues in identifying a suitable site for a full-size, synthetic 3G Pitch in Peebles. In total, 24 different sites across the town had been considered and examined in detail with the current preferred site agreed by the Executive Committee as being at Victoria Park. There continued to be significant public interest, both positive and negative, in the Planning Application for the new pitch at Victoria Park and the Tweeddale Councillors faced difficulties in respect of this issue. Local Councillors had concluded that the Planning Application for the Pitch at Victoria Park should be withdrawn, in order to allow alternative sites to be investigated further and to provide adequate time for the Tweeddale Councillors to consult with the wider community of Peebles. The report noted that this change in the pitch programme would require a re-profiling of the capital plan as approved at Council on 11 February 2016. Members discussed the report and expressed the hope that the community of Peebles could come together to decide what they would like so that Tweeddale was not left without a 3G pitch facility. However, it also needed to be made clear that no new sites would be included in the proposed further consultation for Peebles, but a review of the sites which had been considered previously, and the potential size and cost of any future pitch on the sites left which had not been discounted for other reasons. It was agreed that a further report be brought back to Executive in June setting out the way forward for the 3G Pitch programme but that more time be given to the Tweeddale Councillors to consult about a site for the Peebles 3G pitch before bringing back proposals.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) **to withdraw the Planning Application for the new 3G Pitch at Victoria Park, Peebles, to allow for a further period of consultation; and**
- (b) **that a further report be brought to the Executive Committee in June 2016 setting out the way forward for the 3G Pitch programme.**

The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm