

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, 2 October, 2018 at 10.00 am

Present:- Councillors S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison (Vice-Chairman), G. Edgar, C. Hamilton, E. Jardine, T. Miers, M. Rowley, R. Tatler and G. Turnbull

Also present:- Councillors H. Anderson, J. Greenwell, S. Hamilton, W. McAteer, C. Ramage.

Apologies:- Councillors S. Mountford and T. Weatherston

In Attendance:- Executive Director (R. Dickson), Service Director Children & Young People, Service Director Assets & Infrastructure, Service Director Regulatory Services, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Ms A. Ferahi, Mr G. Jarvie, Mr I. Topping, Mr M. Armitage and Mr L. Mendoza.

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Hamilton chaired the meeting for consideration of the Education business. In her welcome to the meeting, she reminded those present that the Scottish Borders Health and Social Care Partnership had launched the first Scottish Borders Healthy Lives Week. The new campaign asked people to play their part to make the right choices to keep healthy and active. Members were invited to visit the display in the Council's reception area and to make a personal pledge to improve their health.

1. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES - EDUCATION STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2017-18

- 1.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director, Children and Young People, providing a summary of progress in Educational standards of attainment and achievement across early years settings, additional support needs provisions and schools in the Scottish Borders. The report also presented a summary of progress in relation to the expectations set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) which set out the national priorities for Education and expectations regarding the key drivers of improvement: school leadership, teacher professionalism, parental engagement, assessment of children's progress, school improvement and performance information. The key priorities for school session 2018/2019 were set out within the drivers and these set the context within which all education settings based their improvement plans. The progress made in school session 2017/18 was contained within the Education Standards and Quality Report attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Service Director drew Members' attention to progress in the Scottish Borders within the four key priorities set out in the NIF and in particular to improving attainment in literacy and numeracy. For school leavers, significant improvement had been evidenced with an increase of over 4% in National 5 English and an increase of 3% of S4 pupils achieving a literacy award; an increase of 9% in National 5 Maths and an increase of 4.5% S4 pupils achieving a numeracy award. As detailed in the Education Standards and Quality Report and with respect to the percentage of pupils gaining awards at all levels, the Scottish Borders was doing well in comparison to the national average and comparator authorities. There was

a focus on improving inclusion, equality and health and well-being in all Scottish Borders education settings. In terms of areas for improvement there was further work to do on closing the attainment gap through targeted interventions with support through the Pupil Equity Fund particularly where the attainment gap was most persistent: writing and numeracy in Primary 4 and all aspects of literacy and numeracy in Primary 7. In the senior phase a key priority was to develop a young workforce through partnership working and provision of a robust and meaningful curriculum to create different pathways and broader opportunities which could be tailored to the needs of the young person.

- 1.2 Members welcomed the positive progress in the four NIF priorities as evidenced in the Scottish Borders Council Education Standards and Quality Report for 2017/18. With reference to the 95.83% of school leavers in 2016/17 being in a positive destination, which was 2% above the national average, a question was asked about what percentage of the young people remained in or returned to the Borders. Members were advised that this was very difficult to quantify, as Further Education destinations were included in the statistic. However officers would liaise with Skills Development Scotland and drill down through the figures for further information about this. In this regard, the Council was working with partners to identify skills gaps in the Borders and look at what could be done to develop opportunities within schools. In response to other points raised, the Service Director emphasised that there was a strong budget commitment from the Council for partnership working with youth groups and organisations in the third sector, recognising that these groups brought forward a different voice and alternative space for young people. Further information was provided about the development of digital learning, the aim being to put a digital hub in each High School and establish interactive distance learning with tutors. For the last two years, to address the deficit in staff to teach certain subjects, the Council had been growing its own teacher workforce, in partnership with the University of Highlands & Islands and more recently the University of Dundee. In 2018/19 the programme was being extended to include Primary Education and Teachers of Science, Technologies, Engineering and Maths. In answer to questions from Mr Topping information was given about the establishment of a 'virtual school' to track and monitor the impact of targeted actions on progress of pupils in deciles 1 and 2 and the establishment of a post as single point of ownership to track and support the Authority's Looked After Children. With regard to benchmarking within schools, secondary teachers continued to use Insight (Scottish Government Senior Phase benchmarking tool) to analyse Senior Phase data. Twice yearly Senior Leaders engaged with officers about this data and areas for development. The Chairman thanked officers for their presentation.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the overall positive progress being made by the Education Service in delivering the National Improvement Framework in Scottish Borders Council Early Years settings and schools.**
- (b) **AGREED the improvement priorities and action plan for improvement in school session 2018/19 as detailed in Section 5 in Appendix 1 to the report.**

2. DYSLEXIA POLICY

With reference to paragraph 15 of the Executive Committee Minute of 19 June 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People seeking approval for a new Dyslexia Policy. The Quality Improvement Manager explained that the identification of literacy difficulties including dyslexia was an area of concern for staff, pupils and parents. Parents had raised concerns regarding the 'diagnosis or labelling' of dyslexia. The Policy provided a very clear and robust framework based on national guidance and advice and offered support for schools and parents in this difficult area. The purpose of this guidance was to set out policy in this area and to ensure that all staff were aware of their responsibilities and roles to support children

and young people who had, or may have had, dyslexia. This involved the identification of dyslexia in a timely fashion and the provision of timely effective adaptations and interventions (including technological solutions). A comprehensive toolkit had been developed to support the implementation of the Policy in schools. The draft Policy was attached as an Appendix to the report. In the ensuing discussion, Members welcomed this policy which they recognised as being long-awaited. In response to questions about timescales around diagnosis and associated expectations of parents, it was stressed that there was no one test for dyslexia and due to different interventions it was difficult to put a timeframe on this. However the communication to parents was that this Policy would facilitate earlier diagnosis by P3/P4 rather than having to wait until secondary school stage.

DECISION

- * **AGREED to recommend to Council adoption of the Dyslexia Policy (2018).**

3. EXAM RESULTS 2017-2018

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People providing information on the progress schools were making in the Broad General Education for P1 to S3 and Senior Phase S4-6 Scottish Qualifications Examinations for session 2017/18. With the aid of a visual presentation Quality Improvement Officer, Catherine Thomson, summarised the information provided in the comprehensive report. In 2017/18 all areas of Literacy and Numeracy in the Broad General Education in P1, P4, P7 and S3, apart from P2, were above 75% and in particular Listening and Reading were above 80%. For session 2018/19, 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. Ms Thomson explained the use of the Insight Benchmarking Tool to summarise results in the Senior Phase S4-6 and to produce tables of comparator figures. She also referred to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which standardised awards across the SCQF levels. The attainment data within the report did not include the wider achievement awards, which were on the qualifications framework at the same level. These would be provided in a further update of Insight data in March 2019 when all the information on attainment was available. Tables of S4-6 overall attainment showed an improving trend in pass awards. 98% of S4 achieved a Literacy award and 97% of S4 achieved a National 5 English, increases from 2017 of 3% and 4% respectively. 92% of S4 achieved a Numeracy award and 86.3% of S4 achieved a National 5 award in Maths, increases from 2017 of 4.5% and 9% respectively. This year's Higher results demonstrated a consistently positive trend with the percentage of young people gaining an award at Higher remaining at 85%. It was noted that this was the first year of the new assessment arrangements for Higher. The percentage of young people gaining an award at Advanced Higher had risen very slightly at 89%, compared to 2017. The report went on to give 'Closing the Gap' data tables noting that this data would change when the qualifications update came through in February. Members welcomed the positive attainment trends in Literacy and Numeracy and the improving trends in exam results across all levels and thanked all the staff involved. It was noted that there had been scheduled a Members' briefing about the Insight Benchmarking Tool to which the external Education representatives to Executive Committee would also be invited.

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.

CHAIRMAN

On behalf of the Executive Committee, the Chairman offered good wishes to Donna Manson, Service Director Children and Young People, as she prepared to leave the Scottish Borders to take up the post of Chief Executive at the Highland Council. She thanked Donna for the huge amount of work which she had delivered with enthusiasm and dedication in the Borders for young people. In reply Donna said it had been a

privilege to work in the Scottish Borders and she thanked all staff, partners and elected Members for their support.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Haslam took the Chair for the remaining business.

4. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting of Executive Committee held on 4 September 2018.

DECISION

AGREED the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

5. SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION - MONITORING GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET (2018/19)

- 5.1 With reference to paragraph 2 of the Executive Minute of 21 August 2018, there had been circulated copies of an extract of the Minute of a Special meeting of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee following a Call-in of the decision of the Executive Committee relating to the Monitoring of the General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring 2018/19. The Call-in read as follows:

"I would like to call in the decision of the Executive meeting on 21 August 2018 at item 5 on the agenda – the quarterly report on the Monitoring General Fund Revenue Budget 2018/19.

I do not consider that there was sufficient examination at the meeting of the 41 pages of detail which comprised this series of papers. That may result in the view that there should have been amendments or additions to the recommendations."

- 5.2 The Chief Financial Officer had summarised the report to the Executive Committee of 21 August 2018 and confirmed that the Committee had agreed the report's recommendations. Members who had supported the Call-in and Members of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee had been asked to submit questions beforehand to allow officers to prepare for the meeting, and a copy of these questions along with summarised answers was circulated at the meeting. The Chief Financial Officer had given answers to each of the questions and the Chairman gave Members of the Committee the opportunity to raise any supplementary points for information or clarification. After the question and answer session and a detailed discussion of the issues Members had agreed:-

- (i) to note the decisions of the Executive Committee with regard to the monitoring of the General Revenue budget 2018/19; and*
- (ii) to compliment the work of Council officers in terms of their review of the financial circumstances of the Council emphasising sound financial management.*

It was agreed to recommend to the Executive Committee:-

- (i) that all Elected Member be encouraged to approach the Chief Executive or member of the Corporate Management Team to seek further explanation or clarification for any matter contained within a financial monitoring, or any other, committee report;*

- (ii) *that a further Members briefing session be held on financial planning, monitoring and terminology, to ensure Members had an understanding of the processes involved; and*
- (ii) *to request the Chief Executive and Chief Financial Officer to investigate any changes which could be made in mechanisms used for virements.*

DECISION

AGREED to approve the recommendations of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee as detailed above.

6. LOCAL HOUSING STRATEGY 2017-22 YEAR 1 PROGRESS

With reference to paragraph 11 of the Minute of 5 September 2017, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services providing an overview on the Annual Progress Report which set out what had been achieved in the delivery of the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017 – 22 and seeking approval for submission of the report to Scottish Government. The LHS Progress Update Report 2018 and Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix 2017-22 were attached as appendices to the report. The Council and its partners had made excellent progress since the LHS was formally approved by Council in September 2017. Work included the delivery of 145 new affordable homes, development and launch of a new 10-year Integrated Strategic Plan for Older People's Housing Care and Support, with four extra care developments already underway and 85 major adaptations being completed. The bedding-in of the new Customer Advice and Support Services had seen an encouraging drop in the number of homelessness presentations in 2017-2018 and the submission of a very ambitious Strategic Housing Investment Plan, underpinned by up to a record level (£174.5m) of investment, were just some of the main achievements in the delivery of the LHS's first year. Members discussed the report and welcomed the fact that the ambitious targets set were being exceeded. It was noted that ongoing work and consultations relating to the Main Issues Report, a forerunner to the Local Development Plan, included identification of brownfield sites and gap sites suitable for housing. In response to a question about the tables within the Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix, the Senior Housing Strategy Officer advised that most of the outcomes which were indicated in red as having not been met were out-with the Council's control. She agreed that, to be helpful, in future reports those areas, indicated red, that were within the Council's control would be made clearer.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the progress made in delivering on the Strategic actions as set out in the Annual Update Report and Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix appended to the report.**
- (b) **AGREED to approve submission of the Annual Report and Matrix to the Scottish Government.**

7. URGENT BUSINESS

Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the item dealt with in the following paragraph should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to make an early decision.

7.1 GALASHIELS BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT PROPOSAL

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director outlining the Business Improvement District (BID) proposal for Galashiels, which had been developed by Galashiels Chamber of Trade in conjunction with Energise Galashiels. The report highlighted the role and contribution from the Council and recommended appropriate support. Business Improvement District (BID) initiatives were promoted by the Scottish Government to support sustainable economic growth. The Principal Officer

(Regeneration) advised that there were currently around 39 BIDs operating across Scotland, including in Selkirk. A range of measures were being developed to stimulate economic development activity around the Borders Railway as part of the Borders Railway Blueprint Plan. The Galashiels Town Centre BID business plan had a range of projects in four themed areas including 'Developing Events & Attractions', 'Promoting a Vibrant Galashiels', 'Creating a Welcoming Environment' and 'Business Development'. The BID levy would provide an estimated £190,000 per annum to deliver the projects within the 5 year business plan. A Steering Group would progress with a positive and proactive campaigning programme in the run up to the ballot date, on 29 November 2018, to encourage as many positive votes as possible. If the BID ballot was successful, the BID business plan would be implemented over a five year period. The proposal was being led by the local business community. Its key aim was to contribute to the overall regeneration of Galashiels with a particular focus on increasing footfall in the heart of the town centre. In the discussion that followed Members commented on the interest and engagement within the town in support of the proposal which was being managed by an enthusiastic and very capable steering group. In response to a question about the precise area covered by the BID proposal the Principal Officer agreed to circulate a map to Members to provide that information.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to support the Galashiels Town Centre Business Improvement District (BID), noting the intended ballot date of 29 November 2018;
- (b) that the Council's Democratic Services Team manage the BID Ballot process and the Council's Customer Service Team provide the financial management of the BID levy on the basis of full cost recovery;
- (c) to note the financial implications of £5,476 per annum for the Council for its BID Levy contribution and to support the BID initiative with 'Yes' votes for its properties;
- (d) to note that, subject to a ballot result in favour of the proposal, Council would appoint an Elected Member to represent the Council on the Galashiels BID Levy Board, along with a Council officer for advisory support; and
- (e) that the Principal Officer (Regeneration) circulate to Members a map of the area covered by the BID proposal.

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.

9. SALE OF KELSO FORMER HIGH SCHOOL

The Committee considered a report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am