

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, 30 April, 2019 at
10.00 am

- Present:- Councillors C. Hamilton (Chairman – Education Business), S. Haslam (Chairman), S. Aitchison, G. Edgar, E. Jardine, T. Miers, S. Mountford, M. Rowley, R. Tatler, G. Turnbull and T. Weatherston
- Also present:- Councillors S. Bell, J. Greenwell, W. McAteer, N. Richards.
- In Attendance:- Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Officer Education, Clerk to the Council, Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling)

EDUCATION BUSINESS

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

CHAIRMAN

Councillor Hamilton chaired the meeting for consideration of the Education business

1. **EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE EXPANSION**

- 1.1 With reference to paragraph 5 of the Council Minute of 31 May 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People, in response to the recommendation from the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 11 March 2019 that the Executive Committee consider providing 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from August 2019, for all eligible 2 year olds, rather than from August 2020, regardless of whether or not they lived in one of the expanding primary school catchment communities. The relevant extract from the Minute from the Audit and Scrutiny meeting had also been circulated. The claim of residents supporting the petition entitled 'Nursery Place discrimination in Peebles 2019' was that the decision to roll out increased provision of nursery hours by catchment area was discriminatory. The Chief Officer Education, Michelle Strong, outlined the background and national expectations in relation to the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion. Currently all 3 and 4 year old children (and eligible 2 year olds) were entitled to 600 hours ELC a year, depending on their birth date. This entitlement did not change until August 2020. In 2020, the entitlement changed to 1140 hours, which would equate to a full day during term time. The Scottish Government blueprint set out that Local Authorities were to determine the most appropriate way to phase the expanded hours, reflecting the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. In Scottish Borders a priority list was created, based on the Child Poverty Index, using thorough and robust data, which set out the order of phasing for all catchment communities. This approach was approved by the Executive Committee on 7 November 2017 and the programme of expansion agreed by full Council on 31 May 2018. The Programmed Expansion Plan submitted to the Scottish Government was attached as an appendix to the report. Ms Strong outlined the complexity and risk of deviating from this approved programme of implementation as detailed in the report and recommended that the Council continued with the agreed model.

- 1.2 The Executive Committee went on to consider the implications of providing 1140 hours of ELC for all eligible 2 year olds from August 2019 rather than August 2020 and received answers to their questions. In terms of the number of eligible 2 year olds, it was confirmed that the 37 quoted within the report was based on this year's enrolment. Due to multiple factors, it was not possible to establish specific numbers for 2019/20 which added to the complexity of the programme to expand nursery provision. In response to a question about risks of provision of nursery childcare from the private sector and what safety net was provided in the event of closure, Ms Strong confirmed that the Council would have a duty to provide alternative placements. In terms of standards, the Council worked closely with providers and with the Care Inspectorate in all settings. In response to questions about financial implications of deviation to the plan in terms of infrastructure and staff resources, Members were advised that the Capital Plan for new buildings and refurbishment of existing buildings was linked to the agreed phasing. In terms of training and payment of additional staff the Scottish Government was providing additional funding for the expansion but this was based on the plans submitted and there was no funding for a deviation to the plan. After further consideration it was proposed by Councillor Weatherston, seconded by Councillor Haslam, and unanimously agreed that the Programmed Expansion Plan agreed by Council on 31 May 2018 and submitted to Scottish Government be continued.

DECISION

AGREED that the Early Learning and Childcare Programmed Expansion Plan, agreed by Council on 31 May 2018 and submitted to Scottish Government, be continued.

2. UPDATE ON WORKSTREAMS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE SCHOOL ESTATE REVIEW

- 2.1 With reference to paragraph 15 of the Council Minute of 29 November 2018 and paragraph 12 of the Executive Minute of 16 April 2019, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People, providing an update on workstreams within the context of the School Estate Review. Lead Education Officer – School Estates, Lesley Munro, highlighted the main points of the report which offered a broad overview of key aspects within each area. Individual reports would continue to be presented where appropriate. With regard to the recommendations approved by Executive Committee with respect to Eyemouth and Earlston Primary Schools, there would be consultations held during the coming months with the respective communities to examine both the design and cluster elements of these projects. In terms of the High Schools, initial meetings had taken place in Galashiels and Hawick with Headteachers and parent representatives. Views were expressed in both towns that there were too many schools and that plans to rationalise and improve condition and suitability would be welcome. To encourage engagement in ongoing consultations, proposals for discussion would make suggestions on the potential number of sites or campuses, locations, likely size and scale of future provisions and considerations for rural schools. With regard to mothballed schools, formal consultations were underway on proposals to close the 3 schools currently mothballed in Ettrick, Bonchester Bridge (Hobkirk) and Eccles/Leitholm. The report detailed projects for Early Years Expansion across the primary school estate to accommodate the additional numbers which would result from the Early Learning and Childcare expansion plan. With regard to the Jedburgh Campus, work was progressing and plans to bring the primary schools together in August were well advanced. In line with the principles of 'Fit for 2024' it was important that the review of the school estate was ongoing and responsive. The output of all the work to date was being collated into a new School Estate Management Plan which would be presented to the Executive Committee for approval.
- 2.2 Members welcomed the positive report and proposals for significant investment in the school estate going forward. In response to a question about added value of individual projects, Ms Munro explained that there would be wider discussions with partners and local consultation to look at all opportunities for co-location and provision of

complementary services. Members stressed that this was particularly important in smaller settlements where there were currently no community facilities available and stressed the importance of involving the community council and local residents in discussions at an early stage. Ms Munro advised that a list of primary schools which had been identified for investment would be shared once this was finalised. With regard to the consultations about Galashiels and Hawick High Schools, Ms Munro agreed to the request from parent representative Ms Ferahi to provide a schedule of consultation dates before the end of term so that parents could be mobilised. In answer to questions about small schools with reducing pupil role, Ms Strong advised that there was no exact threshold in terms of numbers, the focus being on educational benefit of the provision. However once numbers dropped to a single class size it appeared that parents' confidence faltered and there tended to be migration away to a larger school which may meet a wider spectrum of need. In recognising the importance of the rural school within the community the Council engaged with parents and looked at ways of helping to maintain the sustainability of schools once the school role fell below 50. Catchment areas were also being reviewed; for example the catchment area around Yarrow Primary School, which was the subject of a separate report.

DECISION

- (a) NOTED the update on workstreams within the context of the School Estate Review.**
- (b) AGREED:-**
 - (i) to approve the actions proposed as next steps for consultation in Galashiels and Hawick; and**
 - (ii) that the School Estate Management Plan be brought to the Executive Committee within six months.**

3. SENIOR PHASE LEAVERS REPORT FOR 2017-18

- 3.1** With reference to paragraph 2 of the Minute of 4 September 2018, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People, providing an update on destinations and attainment for school leavers. Quality Improvement Officer, Catherine Thomson, was in attendance and gave a slide presentation to highlight the main points of the report, which provided the overall attainment data for the 1178 young people from S4-S6 who left secondary school in May 2018. The report also contained data on the positive destinations of those leavers. Tables within the report compared data from the Scottish Borders with a virtual comparator, the South East Collaborative, and with national figures. It was stated that 95.67% of all leavers from S4-S6 in May 2018 left school into a positive destination. This was greater than all the comparator data. This performance was consistent over a five-year trend and put Scottish Borders Council in the top ten of Local Authorities in Scotland for this measure. 41% of 2018 leavers went onto Higher Education; 27% went on to Further Education and 26% went onto employment; 2% went onto training and 1% to do voluntary work. The highest percentage for five years of young people who lived within the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2 moved onto Higher Education and the lowest percentage for those in a negative destination. In terms of literacy and numeracy, 95% of all leavers in 2018 achieved SCQF Level 4 literacy and 92% achieved that level of numeracy. This was in line with the virtual comparator for the authority. 87% of all leavers in 2018 achieved SCQF Level 5 Literacy and 71% achieved Numeracy. This was in line with or greater than the virtual comparator. Performance of the most deprived 20% of S4 leavers at SCQF Level 3-5 was above the virtual comparator and there was improved performance from 2017 for all Care Experienced leavers at SCQF level 5 Literacy and Numeracy. The report went on to detail exam attainment data which indicated that attainment for all leavers in the Scottish Borders was in line with the virtual comparator and greater than the South East Improvement Collaborative and National

levels. It was confirmed that each school would provide a summarised update of this report to Parent Councils and staff. Ms Thomson concluded her presentation by drawing attention to ongoing collaboration, in terms of investment in a skills and young workforce plan, with groups including South of Scotland Enterprise, City Deal and the Borders College.

- 3.2 Members welcomed the positive data provided in the report and in particular the figures showing a significant narrowing of the attainment gap and the development of young workforce teams through the increase in number of Modern Apprenticeships. Discussion continued on how to keep young people in the Borders or encourage them to return. Ms Thomson confirmed that the Education and Skills Partnership Group was looking at that and was also working with employers to ensure young people were being educated with the skills and attributes to meet local demand. The Chief Executive advised that partners and agencies were being brought together to re-examine senior stage education to match with jobs and provide a route into the workplace. This would include a programme of more meaningful work experience. Discussion continued about the need to consider the wider picture in terms of the economy and employment; to develop centres of excellence and concentrate on making the Scottish Borders a vibrant destination to encourage young people to work in the Borders or to return once they had completed their higher education.

DECISION

NOTED the update.

4. PROPOSAL TO CONSULT ON CATCHMENT PROPOSAL FOR YARROW PRIMARY SCHOOL AND PHILIPHAUGH COMMUNITY SCHOOL, SELKIRK

With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of 7 November 2017, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Interim Service Director, Children and Young People, proposing to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Community School, Selkirk. Ms Munro explained that a key outcome of the School Estate Review, commenced in February 2016, was to proactively support schools with a roll under 50 to become more sustainable. Following a decline in pupil numbers at Yarrow Primary School, Council officers had been meeting with parents to agree strategies to increase the roll and improve the sustainability of the school. One of the options identified was to consider increasing the size of the catchment area. Officers held an informal drop-in session in Yarrowford Village Hall in December 2018, where views were expressed for the Yarrowford and Broadmeadows area to be included in the catchment for Yarrow Primary School. This area was currently part of the Philiphaugh Community School catchment area. It was therefore proposed that a statutory consultation process was commenced to establish whether there was support for this amendment to both catchment areas. A copy of the draft Proposal Paper for the consultation was attached as an appendix to the report. If there was a positive response to the proposal, and a formal recommendation was made to Councillors to amend the catchment, it was proposed that pupils from the Yarrowford and Broadmeadows area, currently attending Philiphaugh, could decide which school they would like to attend and Council funded transport would be provided. This arrangement would also apply to any future siblings. Based on the number of children currently in the area proposed for consultation it was estimated that a contract for one additional vehicle would be required to transport the children to Yarrow Primary School at an additional cost of £15,000 per annum. In the discussion that followed Members emphasised the importance of retaining Yarrow Primary School if possible and were supportive of the proposal outlined in the report.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the commencement of a Statutory Consultation to obtain views on the proposal to amend the catchment areas of Yarrow Primary School and Philiphaugh Primary School.

OTHER BUSINESS

CHAIRMAN

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

5. MINUTE

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting of 16 April 2019.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman

6. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/20 - BLOCK ALLOCATIONS

With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 12 February 2019, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer seeking approval for the proposed individual projects and programmes within the various block allocations in the 2019/20 Capital Financial Plan. The Chief Financial Officer drew attention to Appendices A – X to the report which detailed proposals for the various projects to be allocated resources from the block allocations within the 2019/20 Capital Financial Plan and those budgets approved by the Executive Committee on 12 February 2019. He explained that these were high level blocks adjusted for underspend. Not all projects had been fully identified at this point. As and when available this information would be brought to Executive for approval. The Chief Financial Officer went on to answer Members' questions before the report was approved.

DECISION

AGREED to approve the block allocation breakdowns contained in Appendices A – X to the report.

7. STRATEGIC HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN PROGRESS FOR 2018-2019

7.1

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Regulatory Services advising Members of the affordable housing annual completions and progress made in the delivery of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) projects for the period 2018-19. The Chief Planning Officer, Ian Aikman, was in attendance to present the report and answer Members' questions. He explained that the SHIP 2019-24, agreed by Council and submitted to Scottish Government in November 2018, had received very positive feedback from Scottish Government officials. For the financial period 2018-2019, 191 affordable homes were delivered against envisaged projects set out in the current SHIP. This exceeded the Council's Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022 (LHS) annual target of 128 new affordable homes, but was slightly less than the 213 homes originally envisaged to be delivered in 2018/19 as per SHIP 2019-24. A table within the report detailed Registered Social Landlord (RSL) project completions within 2018-19. Mr Aikman explained that the Scottish Government 2018-19 allocation of £14.065m to the Scottish Borders area was a record high level of external funding allocated to Scottish Border to date. However, there had been some slippage for a variety of reasons, such as statutory consent processes, site acquisitions and Scottish Environmental Protection Agency objections resulting in around £2.3m underspend which had had to be handed back to Scottish Government. Scottish Government, Scottish Borders Council and RSLs were looking to work together to ensure maximum spend in 2019-20. In an update to the figure stated within the report, Mr Aikman was pleased to advise that the allocation from Scottish Government to assist with the delivery of affordable housing projects in the Scottish Borders during 2019-20 had been increased to £15.998m with a projected allocation of £16.972m for 2020-21. This was a significant increase to deliver an enhanced delivery programme.

7.2

Members welcomed the report which was positive in terms of exceeding the target for the number of homes delivered under the SHIP programme of projects and increased level of investment in the delivery of affordable homes. With reference to the slippage there was

emphasis on the importance of focusing on project approval in order to ensure that the total amount of funding allocated would be spent. A plea was made for robust conversations between officers and Members on project proposals at an early stage to address any local planning concerns and to ensure the provision of high quality developments in every case. In endorsing the progress made, Members also noted the contribution of the SHIP programme of investment in terms of economic development in the area and congratulated the officers involved in its delivery.

DECISION

AGREED to endorse the progress made in the delivery of affordable housing in 2018 – 2019.

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 16 April 2019 was approved.

10. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION UPDATE

Members approved a report by the Executive Director which provided an update on the priority regeneration actions as part of the Council's agreed approach to town centre regeneration and proposals for the Town Centre Fund provided by the Scottish Government for 2019 - 2020.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 pm