

**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL  
17 DECEMBER 2021**

**Questions from Councillor H. Scott**

**1. To Executive Member for Children and Young People**

Education Maintenance Allowance - for each of the last three years external auditors have noted, and brought to notice, that council attendance records for pupils were not being adequately updated by schools and did not always match payment details during the year. Whilst assurances were received from management that this was a housekeeping issue and did not impact on the payments claimed for the year, auditors recommended that arrangements were put in place to confirm records are being correctly updated.

Please detail what management steps are in progress to improve the maintenance of these records, and by whom?

**Response from Councillor C. Hamilton**

Internal Audit has now conducted a review on the operation of Education Maintenance Allowances and their draft report including recommendations they consider necessary to improve the maintenance of EMA records.

These will be agreed with management and any actions that should be taken, including any improvements required by Schools, to improve the administration of the EMA process will be reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 8 February 2021.

The value of Education Maintenance Allowances paid out to Students in 2019/20 was £230,952 with 304 pupils receiving an EMA payment during the financial year.

During the 2019/20 statutory audit process, Audit Scotland raised 21 queries with regards to the Administration of the EMA process. Of these 21 queries, only 2 errors were identified and corrected.

With respect to the other 19 questions, all were answered and followed up as required.

7 of these initial questions related to study periods, which qualify for EMA purposes, but are not recorded in Seemis as the students do not attend classes. 12 questions regarding lateness, self-certification and attendance were resolved.

**Supplementary**

Councillor Scott commented that it was disappointing that this had been raised for the last 3 years and hoped things would now improve. Councillor Hamilton advised that she would follow this up.

**2. To Executive Member for Public Protection**

Section 40 of 'Transport Scotland's Good Practice Guide on 20mph Speed Restrictions', states that, *"Any decision to lower the speed limit to 20mph should seek to avoid the need for extensive police enforcement, as 20mph speed limits will not routinely be enforced, unless it is necessary and in the interest of casualty reduction. The only exception to this is the enforcement of 20mph speed limits outside schools, which takes place on a regular basis."*

- On how many occasions in 2020 has the CAT monitored the 20mph speed limits outside schools?

- What steps will the CAT Strategic Oversight Group take to ensure this level of enforcement is maintained and enhanced?
- Can details of future speed checks outside schools be included on CAT reports to give parents confidence that enforcement of the 20mph speed limit outside schools is being taken seriously?

#### Response from Councillor Turnbull

- The CAT have not undertaken any 20mph speed checks outside schools in the Borders during 2020. This was against a back drop of extended school closures due to Covid from March to August. The CAT have however responded to complaints relating to parking, specifically Peebles, Duns and Selkirk since September 2020.
- If a specific complaint is made in relation to speeding and or parking outside a school liaison takes place with the Safer Routes to School Coordinator and Education staff and an assessment is made of the situation. Based upon the options available enforcement may be necessary and fed into the CAT tasking process.
- Information on speed check activity is already provided to members who participate in the CAT Oversight Group.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Scott asked that more effort be put into this work as it was a Government recommendation and asked for more CAT activity at schools in future. Councillor Turnbull confirmed he would take these comments back to officers.

#### **Question from Councillor Robson**

##### To the Leader

Can I be advised when and in what way the Staff Directories in @Work are to be updated?

##### Response from Councillor Haslam

The directories will be maintained through regular interfaces between Business World and CGI systems. If members are unsure of the correct Officer to contact for an issue they should e mail the members enquiries mail box.

#### Supplementary

Councillor Robson asked that they be kept up-to-date as it was difficult to trace some people in the organisation. Skype also needed to be updated. Councillor Haslam advised that this was a big task for officers at the current time when there was such a demand for front line support.

#### **Question from Councillor Ramage**

##### To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

When will the Teviot Day Centre reopen in Hawick?

##### Response from Councillor Weatherston

This pandemic has unfairly impacted on some groups of the population much more than others, and those people that used the Teviot Day Centre are included within this group. We continue to regularly review the potential of opening of the centre in the light of evolving Scottish Gov't guidance.

As we work and live through this second wave, we need to be reminded just how virulent and highly infectious this virus is. We are still right in the middle of our response and recovery efforts and we must continue to be vigilant in what we can and can't do.

The Borders has in the main done very well, with limited outbreaks, because of the measures that have been put in place but it is essential that we continue with great care to

protect those groups who are at most serious risk. Opening the Teviot Day Centre now for these very vulnerable families, would be simply be too risky at present.

“Managers and staff teams across the Health & Social Care Partnership are however doing as much as they can to alleviate the hardship brought by Covid 19. Our Community Assistance Hubs provide advice and information about the wide range of support that is available and they work closely with Third Sector colleagues like the Borders Carers Centre and Alzheimer’s Scotland on specific support for older people and family carers.

Our Local Area Co-ordinators and RVS Social Centre Co-ordinators maintain contact with our vulnerable households and we are looking closely at what may be possible in terms of opening some form of social centre day support for our learning disability and mental health communities, as well as older people. These will follow Scottish Government guidance linked to the number of households that can meet safely indoors.

“Should anyone be looking for advice and support in the meantime, they can contact the Council’s Community Assistance Hubs on 0300 100 1800 or at [www.scotborders.gov.uk/cahs](http://www.scotborders.gov.uk/cahs).”

#### Supplementary

Councillor Ramage advised she had received distressing calls from carers who had no support. A letter was sent by Scottish Government stating that Day services for adults could reopen with local agreement and she asked why was this not happening at Teviot Day Centre. Councillor Weatherston advised that he would raise this with officers.

#### **Question from Councillor Bell**

##### To Executive Member for Adult Wellbeing

Councillors recently had an informative and reassuring private briefing from officers on how the management of Covid-19 outbreaks in council run care homes and associated care facilities has developed as a consequence of responding to recent events.

I think it is in the public interest that the general learnings we heard about are made public.

Whilst clearly there should be no publicity about specific individuals or specific situations; could the general learnings be made public through the usual channels?

##### Response from Councillor Weatherston

Throughout the pandemic the Council has operated within the strongest possible response, recovery and debrief models. At every stage officers have sought to utilise all learning available and from each separate outbreak.

At this stage I think it is helpful to highlight seven points of general learning:

1. The incubation period of the virus can be up to 14 days in all including older people and a significant proportion of positive cases can be asymptomatic or have symptoms which are not the typical four core COVID symptoms.
2. Symptoms in the elderly can also include: new or worsened confusion and delirium. Diarrhoea and or vomiting. Marked fatigue and tiredness, muscle aches, a sore throat, abdominal pain, a persistent headache and a rash. Staff are now trained to be looking for these symptoms as well as the normal COVID symptoms
3. The Infection Control Team from NHS visit the setting and ensure strict infection control measures are in place pertaining to PPE, PPE stations, Waste Stations and that enhanced cleaning regimes are implemented.

4. Daily multi- disciplinary staff meetings are implemented with the staff managing any outbreak to reinforce key messages and operating procedures.
5. As soon as a COVID outbreak occurs the defined COVID response team follow detailed guidance and :
  - a. Develop urgent staffing contingency plans assuming a worst case scenario for a loss of up to 50% of staff,
  - b. Staff are asked as to their ability to move to 12 hour shifts which reduces the staff numbers in any home in a 24 hour period, increases the staff on any shift and allows a smaller number of staff to be required to provide the necessary care.
  - c. Staff are cohorted into dedicated teams to care for COVID and Non-COVID patients to further improve infection control.
6. Staff and Clients in defined areas that are close to any COVID positive cases are all tested to identify any further spread.
7. District Nursing in the local area are contacted and a response implemented immediately to support clients and staff.

Each of these key elements of learning and many more detailed points result in improved care for those we look after and reduced risks for them and our staff. We will continue to do everything possible to learn at every opportunity and improve our response to COVID 19.