

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

MINUTE of MEETING of the EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE held in the Council Chamber,
Council Headquarters, Newtown St. Boswells
on Tuesday, 20 October 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman - Education Business), S. Bell (from para 3),
C. Bhatia, M. J. Cook, V. Davidson (from para 3), G. Edgar, J. Mitchell, D. Moffat,
D. Paterson, F. Renton, R. Smith.,
Also Present:- Councillors G. Logan, S. Mountford, T. Weatherston.
Apologies:- Councillors D. Parker, J. Brown.
In Attendance:- Depute Chief Executive – People, Service Director Children and Young People,
Chief Officer - Education, Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic
Services Officer (F. Henderson).

EDUCATION BUSINESS

Present:- Mr G. Donald, Mr. J. Walsh, Mr. G. Jarvie, Mrs J. Aitchison, Ms A. Ferhai, Lauren
Cardwell, Eilidh Page.

1. **CHAIRMAN**

Councillor Aitchison chaired the meeting for that part which considered education business.

2. **WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed Lauren Cardwell (Jedburgh Grammar School) and Eilidh Paige (Hawick High School) to their first meeting as Pupil Representatives on the Executive (Education) Committee and hoped the experience was beneficial and interesting for them.

3. **HOME SCHOOLING: SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL SCRUTINY REPORT**

With reference to paragraph 2 of the Scrutiny meeting of 20 August 2015 and paragraph 3.2 of the Scottish Borders Council meeting held on 7 October 2015, there had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director Children and Young People which proposed that the Executive (Education) Committee consider the decision of the Scrutiny Committee of 20 August 2015 in relation to Home Schooling. The report explained that Home Schooling had been considered at the Scrutiny Meeting providing facts on the numbers of children and young people currently home schooled in the Scottish Borders and the guidance and legislation around governance arrangements. Scrutiny Members had expressed concern around national legislation and agreed to recommend that Scottish Borders Council write to the Scottish Government requesting that the 1980 Education Scotland Act be amended to give Local Authorities the power to enforce Section 36 of the Act in order to ensure that children who were being home schooled received a satisfactory education appropriate to their age and aptitude. Scottish Borders Council had referred the matter to the Executive (Education) Committee for consideration. The view of the Scrutiny Committee was that Scottish Borders as a Local Authority had no method of exercising the powers set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, Section 37(1). For parents who had never sent their children to a Scottish Borders School, officers were unable to acquire any information as to whether the children who were being home schooled received a satisfactory education appropriate to their age and aptitude. The report detailed to duties of the Local Authority under the legislation and the Service Director Children and Young People confirmed that there were situations where it was beneficial to the child to be home schooled and Education would engage with these children and work with the Parents. Members discussed the report and while it was noted that the Education Department tried where possible to work in partnership with parents who were home schooling their children, concerns were expressed regarding

those children who were not being reached. The Chairman invited Councillor Logan as Chairman of Scrutiny to address the Committee. Councillor Logan reinforced the discussion by the Committee and asked that a copy of the letter sent to the Scottish Government be circulated to all Councillors and other members of the Committee for information.

DECISION

AGREED that an appropriate letter be sent by the Leader to the Scottish Government expressing concern about existing guidance and request consideration of an amendment to the 1980 Education Scotland Act, ensuring that children who are home schooled receive a satisfactory education appropriate to their age and aptitude.

4. COMMUNITY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIC PLAN FOR CLD IN SCOTTISH BORDERS 2015-18

- 4.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Service Director for Children and Young People recommending approval by the Community Planning Strategic Board of the Community Learning and Development (CKLD) Strategic Plan for 2015-18. The report explained that the CLD Strategic Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships (2012) set out expectations on Community Planning Partnerships (CPP) to use CLD approaches to public service reform and to develop a clear framework for the planning and delivery of CLD by the Local Authority and partners. The CLD Regulations of 2013 required a three year partnership plan for CLD to be developed by the Education Authority by 1 September 2015 and would be subject to scrutiny through the Local Area Network. Local CLD partnerships had been developed in each of the seven learning communities. They had mapped current CLD activity, consulted with learners and community groups and developed action plans to address local priorities. There was clear synergy between the identified CLD priorities and those of the CPP's Reducing Inequalities profile. The CLD Strategic Plan would be instrumental in achievement of key Borders priorities of developing Scotland's young workforce and empowering communities.
- 4.2 Mr Kevin McCall, Lead Senior Education Officer was present and gave a background to the development of the Plan, explained how the plan had been developed, the monitoring and evaluation, building capacity and further development. Mrs Clare De Bolle, Chief Officer (YouthBorders) circulated at the meeting copies of the YouthBorders Impact Report for 2014/2015 and advised that YouthBorders was a membership organisation whose objective was to provide the best youth work possible and be the voice of youth work which was reducing the attainment gap and providing informal out of school education. Funding from the Scottish Government had enabled an evaluation of training being provided throughout the Borders and had highlighted similar priorities and possible projects. In response to a question about the difficulties in attracting adult helpers for voluntary groups the Service Director explained that Volunteer Borders was looking at strategies to make volunteering more attractive. It was highlighted that young people were much more aware of the need for a broad education and being involved in youth work could help to identify future careers and there was collaboration with Borders College. Councillor Bhatia sought clarification regarding the financial resources which would be available, as there were no details within the draft report, and asked whether they would be provided wholly from Scottish Borders Council. The Lead Senior Education Officer advised that there had been a shift in resources approximately 18 months previously and there would be partnership funding, although all available resources had not yet been identified. Councillor Bhatia requested that financial information be included in the report prior to approval.

DECISION

(a) AGREED:-

- (i) **that Scottish Borders Council receive a report on the Community Learning and Development (CLD) Strategic Plan for 2015-18, which would include financial information regarding the delivery of the services to be provided; and**

- (ii) **to support the CLD Strategic Partnership to engage effectively with key CLD partners, facilitating contribution to the annual planning process with members taking an active role within the local area partnerships.**

(b) **NOTED the issues requiring further action during the lifetime of the Plan.**

MEMBER

Mr Walsh left the meeting during consideration of the following item of business.

5. CLOSING THE GAP

The Chief Education Officer explained that the Authority was committed to reducing the inequalities link between attainment and areas of deprivation. The Chief Education Officer referred to a report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on why closing the gap was extremely urgent. It was highlighted that children from higher-income households significantly outperformed those from low-income households at ages 3 and 5. By the age of 5, there was a gap of 10 months in problem solving development and 13 months in vocabulary. This gap continued throughout Primary and a clear literacy gap in primary 4 (ages 7-9) widened by Primary 7 (ages 10-12). By S2 (ages 12-14), more than twice as many students from the least deprived areas performed well in numeracy as those from the most deprived. The gap continued throughout Secondary Education and on leaving School, those from deprived families were consistently less likely to go into further/higher education, employment, training, or voluntary work. The Chief Education Officer went on to explain what was being done to reduce barriers within the Scottish Borders. Also present was Sandra Davidson, Headteacher at Langlee Primary School. She advised that 80% of pupils attending Langlee Primary School were in 1-3 deciles, although she emphasised the need to look beyond the deciles as some pupils were achieving very well. Following an HMIE inspection in November 2013 where the school scored satisfactory in terms of Improvement in performance, the school's own data showed that across the school, while many children were performing less well than their peers, almost all were making some progress in reading and writing, and a few were making good progress. The results of a P6 screening in January 2013 illustrated the age of the child compared with their spelling age. Langlee Primary School was then selected to take part in the Scottish Government Raising Attainment for All Project. In January 2015 50% of pupils from P2 – P7 were at or above chronological age for reading and the Staff set themselves a target to increase this by 10% (17 pupils) by May 2015. It was reported that this had not been achieved, however they had achieved an increase of 1% (6 pupils) at or above expected levels; 5 children were only 1 month behind chronological age; a reduction in the number of children 2 or more years behind chronological age and 47% of children had made more than 4 months progress since January 2015. Mrs Davidson explained that the next steps were to continue with reading – use CfE data as well as standardised test data; encourage parents to come into school and work alongside the pupils so that they could assist with homework and use 1-1 coaching with more pupils. The reputation of the school was growing and the school roll had increased by 40 pupils. There was a discussion about the need to change and modernise the methods of engagement with families which might include mediums such as Facebook. In response to a question on the work being done with children before they reached school it was noted that the Early Years Centres were having a very positive impact on learning as this allowed engagement from pre-birth, with antenatal classes being offered.

DECISION NOTED.

MEMBER

Councillor Renton left the meeting.

The Education Business concluded at 11.40 a.m. and there followed a short adjournment.

OTHER BUSINESS

6. **CHAIRMAN**

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

7. **MINUTE**

The Minute of meeting of the Executive Committee of 29 September 2015 had been circulated.

DECISION

APPROVED for signature by the Chairman.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

MINUTE

1. The private section of the Minute of the Executive Committee held on 29 September 2015 was approved.

SOCIAL WORK COMPLAINTS REVIEW SUB-COMMITTEE

2. The Minute of the Social Work Complaints Review Sub-Committee held on 17 September 2015 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 12.45 p.m.