

MEETING OF FIFE COUNCIL

Thursday 2 December 2021

QUESTION 1 FROM COUNCILLOR JONNY TEPP

Given the impact of Covid on Children's education will the administration reconsider its position on P1 deferrals and support the 'give them time' campaign call for the full funding of automatic deferral in 2022 ahead of the P1 automatic deferrals planned for 2023.

Answer

In October 2020 the Scottish Government committed to introducing legislation to ensure that all children who are not yet five on the first day of school are able to receive funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) if parents choose to defer entry into Primary 1. This legislation is planned to be implemented for academic session 2023-24 and a funding package associated with this change has still to be agreed.

In May, the E&CS Sub Committee agreed, from August 2022, that funding should be allocated to allow the Education Service to approve a discretionary deferral, where it was agreed this was in the best interests of the child, funded with a partner provider, where requested.

Subsequently, Scottish Government wrote to Directors of Education, in September, inviting volunteer Local Authorities for the Second

Year ELC Deferral Pilots, 2022-23. Fife Council noted interest in piloting the ELC Deferral process. The outcome of this submission was received on 22 October 2021, inviting Fife Council to become a funded pilot authority for 2022-23.

The E&CS Sub Committee of 9 November noted the action taken in response to the Scottish Government invite for notes of interest in the P1 Deferral Pilot and agreed that officers progress with the work required to deliver the pilot.

Therefore, it has been confirmed that Fife Council is able to offer an additional year of Funded ELC to all children eligible, whose parent(s)/carer(s) apply to defer entry to Primary School (from 17th August 2022).

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QUESTION 2 FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES CALDER

What lessons can the Council education service learn from Estonia which according to the OECD's PISA scale has the best education system in Europe?

Answer

Our strategic approach to improving curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment approaches in Fife continues to be informed by UK and international research and practice, as well as our own learning and evidence-base of what works for our children and young people in Fife. There are many aspects of the approaches taken in Estonia that reflect our key priorities in Fife, e.g. strong focus on learning through play in the Early Years, supporting and encouraging teacher agency and creativity to ensure that children and young people are engaging in meaningful and relevant learning experiences, ongoing plans to reduce the cost of the school day - removing any barriers to learning children and young people may have as a result of poverty, and a strong focus on continuing to enhance digital skills and confidence to support learning at school and at home.

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QUESTION 3 FROM COUNCILLOR MARGARET KENNEDY

Audit Scotland's Community Empowerment COVID-19 Update places an expectation on Councils to reflect on the impact of COVID and reshape ways of working. The emphasis being on building more local decision-making structures with active local participation and shared power to allow decisions to be taken that matter locally.

What measures has Fife Council put in place to achieve this?

Answer

Fife Council has well developed local decision making structures through Area Committees. The council has been at the forefront of decentralisation and engagement with local communities. The council also supports many local community groups in delivering services for their local communities. The council is anticipating that the Scottish Government will be restarting the Local Governance Review and the council expects to engage with that process as it has done in the past and look to further options for local decision making.

Supplementary

It would be helpful to understand how this has happened at local area level.

Answer

An evaluation has still to be undertaken but will ask officers to report to committee when complete.

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QUESTION 4 FROM COUNCILLOR ANDY HEER

The residents of Gateside have asked for a speed camera to be installed on the A91 in an attempt to stop vehicles speeding through their village but have been told by Transportation officers that fixed speed cameras are "against policy".

When was this policy introduced and by whom?

Answer

The location of safety cameras isn't a decision for the Council; rather the Scottish Safety Camera Programme, which operates under the umbrella of Police Scotland. While we are advised, the Council doesn't decide on enforcement locations nor the type of camera used.

The placing of safety cameras is generally driven by a history of injury collisions and the speed profile at a location. Although there was a serious accident within Gateside this year, it's the only injury crash recorded there over the last 5 years and speed was not noted as a causation factor.

Roads & Transportation Services is currently considering further traffic calming options for Gateside, which will be discussed during the next round of ARP Member consultations.

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QUESTION 5 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

Internal Audit Report 51 records that the Business Case in relation to Scotland Excel agreed by the Policy & Co-ordination Committee in March 2018 was altered on December 17th 2019. Which officer authorised that change and who, officers and members, was informed/aware of the change at the time or immediately afterwards?

Answer

The business case was updated by the programme manager in consultation with the Head of Revenues and Commercial Services and ratified by the SRO for the programme. The changes were then subsequently agreed by the Commercialisation Board which is normal practice when dealing with a multi-faceted project such as this. From the date of change all committee reports to both Standards and Audit Committee and Scrutiny Committee reflected the change to the business case. Officers have agreed per the internal audit report 51 to take this recommendation as a lesson learned, however, it should be noted that the programme delivered and exceeded the financial benefits target as detailed in the original business case and the enhanced benefits will continue to be realised for years to come.

Supplementary

Were elected members only made aware of this when it was reported to committee?

Answer

That appears to be the case, yes.

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QUESTION 6 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

At its September meeting, Council was advised that a review of arrangements covering the relationship between the Council and its Arms-Length External Organisations was not required because such a review was already underway. When and where is that review expected to report its findings?

Answer

Just to clarify what I actually said for Councillor Dempsey was, that a review had been carried out and the one I was talking about was undertaken by ECOS some years ago and it is the implementation of that which is still underway and the most obvious element of that was the proposed merger between FSLT and The Golf Trust which is still underway but also we feel probably needs to be looked at again.

We also said we are still in the Covid emergency and that is having an impact on the trusts and we are working with the trust to get them through the next year where we expect their income and usage to continue to be reduced but after that when we see the long term impacts of covid that is the point we would look at undertaking another review, after next May.

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QUESTION 7 FROM COUNCILLOR TONY MIKLINSKI

What are the

1. current opening hours per day,
2. current number of days per week and
3. current total weekly opening hours of the

Cupar Recycling Centre

and

4. are the current total weekly opening hours (from question c above) different from what they were in December 2019?

Answer

Currently, the Cupar Recycling Centre is open from 9.00 am until 12 noon and from 12.45 pm until 5.00 pm each day. It is open two days each week. It is open for a total of 14 hours and 30 minutes each week and, yes, the total number of hours that it is open each week is different from that in December 2019.

Supplementary

Why did Councillor Vettraino mislead the Council in his response to a similar question at the last meeting of Fife Council?

Answer

Different answer as a different question was asked.

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QUESTION 8 FROM COUNCILLOR JAMES CALDER

Is there a plan for indoor inter-school sports events to return and if so what conditions will allow this to take place?

Answer

We have indicated that inter-school competitions should not take place **indoors** as yet, as the school risk assessment protocols for our school buildings must be adhered to and, at this time, we are still required to minimise movement between schools during the school day. Such competitions can take place outdoors and schools can hold competitive sporting events indoors for their own pupils.

The reason for inter-school competitions not taking place at this time is that the unique features of the school environment have been carefully considered. These include the fact that, in line with current JCVI advice, the vaccination of children and young people only began in August. This means that large numbers of unvaccinated children and young people come together in a way that is unlikely to happen in other parts of society. Therefore, we are not bringing together extended groups of young people who would not routinely be together within a school building.

When the guidance changes, we will review the risk assessment accordingly.

Supplementary

Can I have a copy of the guidance referred to?

Answer

Yes

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QUESTION 10 FROM COUNCILLOR DAVE DEMPSEY

The answer to Question 9 at the last Council meeting said “A few areas or localities have used the Place Standard tool as an aid to discussion around community strengths and priorities”. Which areas or localities are those?

Answer

The Place Standard has been used in the following:

Templehall Neighbourhood Plan Kirkcaldy
Town Centre
Anstruther – Active Travel & Sustainable Transport
Linktown and Inveriel
North Queensferry Local Action Plan Rosyth
Glenrothes Town Centre
Glenwood Cowdenbeath
Buckhaven South Neighbourhood Plan Consultation Leven
Promenade consultation,
Buckhaven Action Plan and Spatial Plan Leven
Charrette
Guardbridge
Area Strategic Assessments