

THE FIFE COUNCIL - EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

22 August 2023

10.00 am – 12.15 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Kathleen Leslie (Convener), Lynn Ballantyne-Wardlaw, Aude Boubaker-Calder, Patrick Browne, John Caffrey, Ken Caldwell (substituting for Councillor Naz Anis-Miah), Ian Cameron, Colin Davidson, Dave Dempsey, Sean Dillon, Linda Erskine, Alycia Hayes, Louise Kennedy-Dalby, Lynn Mowatt, Sarah Neal, Daniel Wilson; and Mary Caldwell, Alastair Crockett and Ian Macaulay.

ATTENDING: Sarah Else, Education Manager; Maria Lloyd, Head of Education & Children's Services - Secondary Schools & Specialist Support; Angela Logue, Head of Education & Children's Services - Primary Schools & Improvement Support; Gavin Waterston, Quality Improvement Officer (Health, Wellbeing & Child Protection), Education & Children's Services; Alison Binnie, Finance Business Partner; and Diane Barnet, Committee Officer, Legal & Democratic Services, Finance & Corporate Services.

48. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 22.0.

49. MINUTE

Arising from the minute, with reference to Paragraph 45. (2) - 'Digital Devices Approach for Life Learners' - the convener commented that she had written to the Scottish Government and a response had been received. Both documents were previously circulated and were attached as an appendix to this minute.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the convener's update; and
- (2) otherwise agreed to approve the minute.

Mr Crockett joined the meeting during consideration of the above item.

50. ATTENDANCE REPORT – SESSION 2022/2023

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services - Primary Schools and Improvement Support - providing an overview of the work that had been undertaken in Fife schools and the impact that this had had on pupil attendance.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) noted the work being done in Fife to promote and improve attendance at school;
- (2) agreed to consider an update report in approximately six months; and
- (3) agreed that a specific working group be established to address the reasons for the poor attendance levels of Young Carers - to examine what work had taken place; what had been successful; what had not been successful; and what new strategies could be devised. It was envisaged this working group would comprise: an officer from Fife Education Services; a representative from Fife Young Carers; a Primary School Headteacher; a Secondary School Headteacher; and committee member representation – members to advise the convener of their interest in participating in this working group.

51. SERVICE PUPIL PREMIUM – BENEFIT FOR FIFE PUPILS

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services - Primary Schools and Improvement Support - providing an overview of how receipt of Pupil Service Premium would benefit Service Pupils in Fife (as requested in a Motion to full Council on 11 May 2023). Minute reference paragraph 69 of 2023 FC 83 refers (conjoined Motion one, Amendment one and Amendment two).

Motion

Councillor Hayes, seconded by Councillor Wilson moved to approve the recommendations in the report.

Amendment

Councillor Boubaker-Calder, seconded by Councillor Caffrey moved as an amendment to include an additional recommendation: 'that the Leader of the Administration writes to the Scottish Government to highlight the additional funding of up to £420,000 this would bring to Fife schools and urge consideration was given to the introduction of a Service Pupil Premium.'

Roll Call Vote

For the Motion – 7 votes

Councillors Ballantyne-Wardlaw, Caldwell, Hayes, Kennedy-Dalby, Mowatt, Neal and Wilson.

For the Amendment – 9 votes

Councillors Boubaker-Calder, Browne, Caffrey, Cameron, Dempsey, Davidson, Dillon, Erskine and Leslie.

Having received a majority of votes, the amendment was carried.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised and commented on the possible benefits of this fund if allocated to pupils across Fife;
- (2) scrutinised and commented on the work currently being undertaken across Fife to support Service Pupils through GIRFEC, PEF (Pupil Equity Funding), local strategy and links with national groups;
- (3) requested further updates on the progress, performance and attendance of Armed Forces Children through the BGE (Broad General Education) and Senior Phase Attainment Reports;
- (4) noted the attendance and achievement of children from UK Armed Forces families in Fife's local schools; and
- (5) requested that the Leader of the Administration writes to the Scottish Government to highlight the additional funding of up to £420,000 this would bring to Fife schools and urge consideration was given to the introduction of a Service Pupil Premium.

Councillor Caldwell left the meeting following consideration of the above item.

The Committee adjourned at 11.46 am and reconvened at 11.56 am.

52. EDUCATION SERVICE REVENUE BUDGET 2022-23 PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education - Early Years and Directorate Support and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services - advising the committee of the provisional outturn for the 2022-23 Education Service Revenue Budget, for the areas in scope of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the provisional outturn position (subject to audit) for 2022-23, as detailed in the report, and the reasons for the main variances; and
- (2) progress in achieving approved savings.

53. EDUCATION SERVICE CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2022-23 : PROVISIONAL OUTTURN

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education - Early Years and Directorate Support and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services providing the committee with information on the provisional outturn of the Education Service capital programme for the 2022-23 financial year, and additionally informing of progress on major projects.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the financial position as detailed in the report; and
- (2) that the budget had been revised to reflect the outcome of the Capital Plan review undertaken in February 2021 and the subsequent re-phasing exercise carried out in May 2023.

54. EDUCATION SERVICE REVENUE BUDGET 2023-24 PROJECTED OUTTURN

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education - Early Years and Directorate Support and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services providing the committee with an update on the forecast financial position for the 2023-24 financial year, for the areas in scope of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) considered the current financial performance and activity as detailed in the report; and
- (2) noted the projected outturn position and the relevant areas of projected over and under spend within the Education Service.

55. EDUCATION SERVICE CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2023-24 : PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education - Early Years and Directorate Support and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services providing the committee with information on the overall progress of the Education Service capital programme, for the current financial year, 2023-24, as well as informing the committee of progress on major projects.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the financial position as detailed in the report, and
- (2) that the budget had been revised to reflect the outcome of the Capital Plan review and the annual re-phasing exercise undertaken in June 2023.

56. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services supporting the committee's consideration of the workplan for future meetings of the committee.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) agreed to review the workplan and invited suggestions from the members of the committee for areas of future scrutiny;
- (2) as referenced at Para. 50 (2) – ‘Attendance Report – Session 2022/2023’ – agreed to consider an update report in approximately six months; and
- (3) as referenced at Para. 51 (3) – ‘Service Pupil Premium – Benefit for Fife Pupils: further updates on progress, performance and attendance of Armed Forces Children through the BGE (Broad General Education) and Senior Phase Attainment Reports.

COPY LETTER TO MSP

Jenny Gilruth MSP
Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills
The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Councillor Kathleen Leslie

Fife House
North Street
Glenrothes
KY7 5LT

Tel: 03451 555555 Ext 442320
Mob: 07714 778906

E-mail:
cllr.kathleen.leslie@fife.gov.uk

30 May 2023

Dear Jenny

Digital Devices – Fife Council

The Education Scrutiny Committee welcomes the commitment by the SNP in their manifesto of 2021 to allocate funding to local authorities to provide digital devices for learners.

In 2021-2022 Fife Council's then Education & Children's Services Sub-Committee provided funds of £1million to plan and implement a series of pilot projects for digital device roll-out across our learning estate. Fife's Equity Approach has delivered over 15,500 Chromebook devices, guaranteeing a 1-1 device for all P4-S6 learners.

Should Fife Council receive no further funding, our current Equity funded devices and those issued through the pilot projects will reach the end of their sustainable life in the next 3-5 years.

Funding from the Scottish Government is expected to provide local authorities with financial support for 1-1 devices (as understood from your government's manifesto pledge of 2021) but at this stage, we have no further information regarding timescales, the amount and funding longevity.

Would you be able to confirm when Fife Council will have this information communicated to it with regards to the above commitment?

Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Kathleen Leslie
Education Scrutiny Committee Convener

COPY RESPONSE FROM MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Foghlam agus Sgilean Jenny Gilruth MSP/BPA

T : 0300 244 4000

E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Kathleen Leslie cllr.kathleen.leslie@fife.gov.uk

Our Reference: 202300362635 Your Reference: Digital devices

21 July 2023

Dear Councillor Leslie,

Thank you for your letter dated 30th of May, seeking further information on the device for every child commitment.

The Scottish Government is committed to ensuring every child has access to a device by the end of this Parliament in 2026. We recognise that access to technology is a fundamental aspect of any modern education system and our commitment in the recently published (April 2023) policy prospectus to “improve digital access for learners” reaffirms this.

Across 2,500 schools and 700,000 learners, this is a complex and ambitious commitment, and we have undertaken significant preparatory work. I am aware that many local authorities have invested in devices from their own budgets and in line with their own digital strategies, as has been the case in Fife. We want to consolidate and build on that progress. To that end, I will continue to work with colleagues in COSLA on the most appropriate approach to this commitment and will provide an update to local authorities at the earliest opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

JENNY GILRUTH