

Minutes of Meeting of the Adult and Children's Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 21 August 2013 at 10.05 am.

Present:

Highland Council:

Dr D Alston, Mrs I Campbell, Mr A Christie (Chair), Mrs M Davidson, Ms J Douglas, Mr B Fernie, Mr B Gormley, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Hendry, Mr E Hunter, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mr G MacKenzie (Vice Chair), Mr T MacLennan, Mrs B McAllister, Mr D Millar (Substitute), Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Rattray, Mrs F Robertson, Ms G Ross, Mr G Ross, Ms J Slater

NHS Highland:

Mrs G McCreath, Dr M Somerville

Religious Representatives:

Rev C Mayo, Ms M McCulloch, Mr G Smith

Non-Members also present:

Mr B Clark, Mr J Gray, Mr R Laird, Mr A MacLeod, Mr G Rimell, Mr R Saxon, Dr A Sinclair

In attendance:

Mr H Fraser, Director of Education, Culture and Sport
Mr B Alexander, Director of Health and Social Care
Mr R MacKenzie, Head of Support Services, Education, Culture and Sport Service
Mr C MacSween, Head of Education, Education, Culture and Sport Service/Health and Social Care Service
Ms S MacLeod, Head of Health, Health and Social Care Service
Ms F Palin, Head of Social Care, Health and Social Care Service
Mr E Foster, Finance Manager (Education, Culture and Sport and Health and Social Care)
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Education, Culture and Sport Service
Mrs B Cairns, Principal Officer, Additional Support Needs, Education, Culture and Sport Service
Ms M Campbell, Development Officer (Disability), Health and Social Care Service
Mr C Munro, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)
Ms A Darlington, Action for Children (Third Sector)
Ms V Gale, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs R Daly, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Teachers and pupils, Wick High School

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Mr A Christie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms K Stephen, Mrs M Duncan and Miss A Taylor.

2. Declarations of Interest

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 5 (i) – Mr G Smith (Financial)

Item 5 (ii) – Mr A Christie (Non-financial)

Item 5 (ii) – Mrs G McCreath (Financial)

Item 6 (i) – Mr T MacLennan, Ms J Douglas (Non-financial)

Item 7 – Mr B Gormley, Mr A Christie, Mrs D Mackay, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans, Ms J Douglas (Non-financial)

Item 9 - Mr K Gowans (Financial)

Item 22 – Mrs B McAllister (Non-financial)

Ms G Ross declared a non-financial interest in those items which might raise discussion on Thurso High School, as her husband was a teacher at the School, and advised that if there was any specific discussion in relation to Thurso High School she would leave the room.

Dr D Alston declared a non-financial interest in those items relating to integrated health and social care services as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in discussion.

3. Recess Powers

Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2013 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Adult and Children's Services Committee.

4. Presentation: Wick High School – Belize Trip

Taisbeanadh: Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Ùige – Turas Belize

Pupils from Wick High School undertook a presentation about their recent trip to Belize. The offer of the trip had been made to pupils in S5 and S6 and ten pupils had elected to go. The trip had not only proved to be an experience but also a challenge and one that had benefitted both the school and the pupils themselves.

The trip had meant that pupils were able to explore a different culture and, for many, it had pushed their “comfort zone”. Pupils had raised funds towards the cost and fundraising ranged from holding Bake Sales and discos to seeking sponsorship from local businesses. The first few nights of the trip had been spent in a Tropical Education Centre which had provided them with an opportunity to acclimatise to their new environment. They detailed the various visits that they made while at this location, including the conservation work they had participated in regarding bird catching. The trip had also offered the opportunity to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award expedition which had lasted 4 days and where the pupils covered 40 miles on foot and prepared all their own meals. The experience had taught them perseverance, determination, teamwork and that anything was possible.

Moving on to the volunteering phase, Members were informed that part of the group had helped out in a school while the others had assisted in a clinic. As a result of their experiences at these locations they had realised how privileged they were and how inspirational other individuals could be. In summary, their experience, starting from the point of fundraising to the end of their trip, had been life changing. They did, at this point, express their appreciation to the Highland Council and, in particular, to Ms G Ross, one of their Local Members, for their assistance and support.

Members congratulated the pupils, pointing out that their presentation had demonstrated what could be done with determination. The pupils’ blog had been entertaining and interesting to read and had shown what it was like to immerse oneself into a different culture. The pupils were an inspiration for other young people and they had proved to be great ambassadors for their school and community.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that it was hoped that similar trips could be repeated. There were considerable fundraising issues to consider but models as to how this could be addressed were being investigated, given the considerable benefit that could be achieved for the school.

Thereafter, having thanked the pupils for sharing their experiences, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Revenue Budget – Final Outturn 2012/13 and Monitoring 2013/14
Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach
2012/13 agus Sgrùdadh 2013/14

i. Education, Culture and Sport
Foghlam, Cultar agus Spòrs

Declaration of Interest: Mr G Smith declared a financial interest in this item as a supply teacher and advised that if there was any specific discussion in relation to fostering he would leave the room.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-63-13 \(62kb pdf\)](#) dated 5 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which set out the Revenue Budget unaudited final outturn position for the financial year ending on 31 March 2013 and the monitoring position for the three months to 30 June 2013.

In relation to 2011/12, the unaudited net variance at the end of the financial year was an underspend of £0.002M. The main budget pressures, details of which were provided in the report, related to Additional Support Needs; School Transport; and Catering, Cleaning and Facilities Management. In recognition of these pressures, officers had been asked to identify compensatory savings and underspends had been achieved in a number of budget headings resulting in a balanced budget being delivered. In respect of Devolved School Management, the total surplus figure carried forward by schools was £2.27M, a reduction of 18.1% from the previous financial year.

With regard to 2013/14, the more significant budget pressures identified in the unaudited 2012/13 outturn statement remained in the current financial year. Management action would be taken to identify the extent to which all known pressures could be addressed and the outcome of this exercise would be reported to the Committee on 25 September 2013. However, a number of budget headings would not be predictable until nearer the end of the financial year.

During discussion, Members referred to the data being compiled on teachers' absence and suggested that it should include information on geographical area and long term absence over six months.

In relation to the risk that the 2013/14 savings targets in respect of absence management and absence cover would not be fully met, it was explained that compensatory savings would take the form of avoiding expenditure where there was a discretionary element. A thorough review would be carried out and details of the pressures and proposed compensatory savings would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

With regard to Devolved School Management, information was sought on those schools which had carried forward a deficit and it was confirmed that details, including reasons and proposed remedial actions, would be provided to Members of the Committee.

In relation to school transport, some Members expressed concern regarding the burden being placed on families, particularly those with two or more children, as a result of the Council's policy of charging for concessionary seats. There was also an impact on officer time in terms of assessing routes to determine if they were safe for children to walk to school and it was suggested that consideration be given to reviewing the policy.

In response, the Chairman explained that any review of the policy would be a matter for the full Council. However, information on the local impact of charging for concessionary seats could be provided to Ward Business Meetings.

Thereafter, clarification having been provided on a number of other points, the Committee:-

- i. NOTED** that the Service delivered a balanced budget for financial year 2012/13;
- ii. NOTED** that the overall surplus carried forward by schools at the end of financial year 2012/13 decreased by £0.50M (18.1%);
- iii. NOTED** the projected variances at the end of the first quarter of the new financial year and the commitment to identify compensatory budget savings and other management actions required to offset these pressures by the end of the financial year;
- iv. NOTED** the progress with the achievement of the 2013/14 savings target and the commitment to identify compensatory savings where required;
- v. AGREED** that the data being compiled on teachers' absence include information on geographical area and absences greater than six months;
- vi. AGREED** that details of the compensatory savings referred to in paragraph 4.2 of the report be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;
- vii. AGREED**, in relation to Devolved School Management, that information on schools with deficits, including reasons and proposed remedial actions, be provided to Members of the Committee; and
- viii. AGREED**, in relation to school transport, that information on the local impact of charging for concessionary seats be presented to Ward Business Meetings.

ii. Health and Social Care **Slàinte agus Cùram Sòisealta**

Declarations of Interest:

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager of Inverness and Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mrs G McCreath declared a financial interest in this item as a foster carer and advised that if there was any specific discussion in relation to fostering she would leave the room.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-64-13 \(194kb pdf\)](#) dated 5 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which set out the revenue monitoring final outturn for the Health and Social Care Service budget in 2012/13 and the revenue monitoring statement for the three months to 30 June 2013.

In relation to 2012/13, the unaudited final outturn position for the Health and Social Care Service was an overspend of £0.866M. The budget pressures had been reported to Committee throughout the year, the most significant areas of overspend relating to purchased residential care and residential school placements; placements with independent fostering agencies and unbudgeted residual costs from 2011/12 for adult social care. Compensatory underspends had been achieved in other budget headings and these were detailed in the report.

With regard to 2013/14, the current projection was for a balanced budget but this involved a continuing overspend on out of authority placements and underspend on staffing. Various measures continued to be taken to address the budget pressures.

During discussion, clarification was sought in relation to the Commissioned Child Health – Management and Planning budget in 2012/13 and 2013/14 and it was confirmed that a detailed explanation would be provided to Members of the Committee. In relation to Out of Authority Placements, Members recognised the range of placements covered by this budget heading and suggested that the various elements be separated out in order that trends could be readily identified.

Thereafter, clarification having been provided on a number of specific points, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the budget monitoring position;
- ii. **APPROVED** the actions that continued to be taken;
- iii. **AGREED** that detailed information be provided to Members of the Committee on the Commissioned Child Health – Management and Planning budget; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the description of Out of Authority Placements should reflect the full use of this budget heading.

6. Capital Expenditure – Final Outturn 2012/13 and Monitoring 2013/14

Caiteachas Calpa – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2012/13 agus Sgrùdadh 2013/14

i. Education, Culture and Sport Foghlam, Cultar agus Spòrs

Declarations of Interest:

Mr T MacLennan declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being the Chair of Lochaber Care and Repair but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Ms J Douglas declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that her children might receive musical instruments purchased by the Council but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-65-13 \(179kb pdf\)](#) dated 12 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which advised of the final expenditure position for the 2012/13 Education Culture and Sport Capital programme and informed of progress on the 2013/14 programme. It also outlined various issues arising out of the recent review of the Council's capital programme and sought approval for some new projects as well as amendments to the budgets for several projects. The report also updated on several prioritised feasibility studies as well as the Sustainable School Estate Review. Finally, it

identified ongoing measures to improve communication and performance and also specific matters with actions recommended for approval.

In relation 2012/13, the final year-end position was an underspend of £4.867M which had been had been carried forward to the 2013/14 capital allocation.

With regard to 2013/14, the gross budget was £31.636M which included the balance of unexpended funding from 2012/13 and the additional approved funding for new projects as detailed in the report.

During discussion, clarification was sought in relation to the budget variance in respect of the Aviemore Primary School project. In addition, concern was expressed that a number of works, including the provision of the play park, remained outstanding and it was requested that timescales for completion, as well as an official opening date, be provided to Local Members as soon as possible.

In relation to the Portree Hostel Buildings, Members welcomed the progress which had been made and requested that regular updates be presented to the local Ward Business Meeting. Concern was expressed, however, that the existing single track road to the Margaret Carnegie Hostel was not suitable for heavy construction traffic and it was suggested that discussions take place between officers in Education, Culture and Sport and Transport, Environmental and Community Services with a view to expediting the provision of the new access road which would also serve the future Gaelic school.

With regard to the next stage of the Sustainable School Estate Review in Plockton and Portree, it was requested that dates for meetings be arranged as soon as possible so that Local Members could ensure their availability.

In relation to Project Reviews, Members commented that these were effectively audits and emphasised the importance of specifying not only the issues identified but the proposed improvements. It was suggested that discussions take place with the Head of Internal Audit with a view to implementing a joined up approach to Project Reviews and utilising the Internal Audit Service rather than appointing external contractors.

With regard to the Thurso Library project, timescales for the opening of the temporary library and start and completion dates for the refurbishment were sought.

Thereafter, updates having been provided on a number of other projects, the Committee:-

- i. NOTED** the final expenditure position for the 2012/13 capital programme as detailed in Appendix 1;
- ii. NOTED** the status of the 2013/14 capital programme as at the end of June 2013 as detailed in Appendix 2;
- iii. NOTED** the status of the major capital projects as detailed in Appendix 3;
- iv. NOTED** the outcome of the review of the General Fund capital programme as detailed in paragraph 4.1.1 of the report and **AGREED** that the remaining balance of £161,000 for the Dornoch Sports Centre project from the previously approved capital programme be reallocated to the Life Cycle Investment budget heading as detailed in paragraph 4.1.2 of the report;
- v. AGREED** the new projects and amendments to existing budget allocations

as detailed in section 4.2 of the report:

- vi. **NOTED** the status of the prioritised feasibility studies as detailed in section 5 of the report and **AGREED** to continue with the studies on Beauly Primary School and Inverness High School;
- vii. **NOTED** the status of the Sustainable School Estate Review as detailed in Section 6 of the report;
- viii. **NOTED** the proposed measures to improve communication with Ward Members as detailed in paragraph 7.1 of the report;
- ix. **NOTED** the proposed approach to learn from the experience of completed projects and the outcome of the review of the project at Lochardil Primary School as detailed in section 7.2 of the report;
- x. **AGREED** that the former playing fields and pavilion at Fascally, Brora be declared surplus to operational requirements;
- xi. **AGREED** that the former bus garage building and surrounding area at Drummuie, Golspie be declared surplus to operational requirements;
- xii. **AGREED** that the disused playing field area adjacent to the former Knockbain Primary School, Moniack be declared surplus to operational requirements;
- xiii. **AGREED**, in relation to Aviemore Primary School, that clarification of the budget variance and timescales for the completion of outstanding works and the official opening ceremony be provided to Local Members;
- xiv. **AGREED** that regular progress reports on the Portree Hostel Buildings be presented to the local Ward Business Meeting;
- xv. **AGREED** that discussions take place between officers in Education, Culture and Sport and Transport, Environmental and Community Services with a view to expediting the provision of a new access road to the Margaret Carnegie Hostel;
- xvi. **AGREED**, in relation to the next stage of the Sustainable School Estate Review in Plockton and Portree, that dates for meetings be arranged as soon as possible;
- xvii. **AGREED** that discussions take place with the Head of Internal Audit with a view to implementing a joined up approach to project reviews; and
- xviii. **AGREED**, in relation to the Thurso Library project, that information on timescales for the opening of the temporary library and start and completion dates for the refurbishment be provided to Members of the Committee.

ii. Health and Social Care **Slàinte agus Cùram Sòisealta**

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-66-13 \(47kb pdf\)](#) dated 9 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which updated Members on progress to date with the Health and Social Care Capital Programme and provided information on the final outturn 2012/13 and monitoring 2013/14 as well as an update on fire safety and other health and safety capital works being undertaken.

In relation to 2012/13, the near-final outturn was an underspend of £1.170m, comprising £0.098M relating to the Children's Residential Unit in Wick, £0.005M on other residential units and £1.067M relating to the Care Home Investment project.

With regard to 2013/14, £1.679M had been allocated by the Council and £1.170M had been carried forward from 2012/13. Subsequent adjustments and re-profiling of projected spend as set out in the report provided a working budget total of £3.914M.

The work taking place at Invernevis House having been commended, the Committee otherwise **APPROVED** the report and budgetary position.

7. Preventative Spend Update

Fios as Ùr mu Chosg Casgach

Declarations of Interest:

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager of Inverness and Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mrs D Mackay and Mr M Green declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of East Sutherland and Nairn Citizens Advice Bureaux respectively but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interest did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Ms J Douglas and Mr K Gowans declared non-financial interests in this item on the grounds of being Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Mr B Gormley declared a non-financial interest in this item as a family member worked for Action for Children but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-67-13 \(257kb pdf\)](#) dated 9 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which provided an update on the Council's commitment for preventative spend to improve outcomes for young children and older people and to address deprivation, including a new proposal for a Family Support Public Social Partnership.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report and the proposals therein. A number of community development posts had been created to support the preventative spend agenda and it was suggested that job descriptions for these, together with information on where they would be based, be provided to Members and other relevant groups. In addition, the importance of post-holders making the necessary links and reporting to District Partnerships was emphasised.

Members commended all those involved in agreeing the model for the new integrated teams. However, it was recognised that further consideration was required in some areas due to local circumstances and, in relation to Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, it was requested that Local Members be involved in discussions.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on preventative spend proposals;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposal for a Family Support Public Social Partnership;
- iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Finance, Housing and Resources Committee the establishment of two Health Improvement posts;
- iv. **AGREED** that job descriptions for all new posts created to support the preventative spend agenda and information on where they would be based be provided to Members and other relevant groups; and
- v. **AGREED** that Local Members be involved in discussions regarding the Integrated Team model in Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey.

8. SQA 2013 – Initial Analysis

Ùghdarras Teisteanasan na h-Alba 2013 – Anailis Thùsail

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-68-13 \(141kb pdf\)](#) dated 7 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which provided an initial analysis of SQA results in Highland Schools in 2013.

During discussion Members welcomed the report and congratulated schools, pupils and all involved on the high levels achieved in the recent SQA examinations and stressed that the Council should take pride in the quality of its education provision. Particular reference was made to press criticism that SQA successes resulted from a “dumbing down” of examination standards. This unsubstantiated view was particularly discriminatory towards young people and especially difficult for those who had not performed as well as they might have hoped. It was important to celebrate these very real successes and not diminish them in any way.

There had been many changes over recent years for pupils, staff and parents. Highland had been particularly successful in enabling pupils to develop their confidence and realise their full potential. Parental partnerships were now encouraged and had played an important role in terms of supporting the expectations and developing the confidence of young people.

The high level Continuing Professional Development programme now allowed schools to identify and address staff needs. The quality of probationer teachers in Highland schools was unprecedented and their impact on young people was highly significant. In addition, new and refurbished school buildings had also contributed to attainment and achievement.

Responding to a request, the Chairman confirmed that every effort would be made to include information on trends in relation to pupils with Additional Support Needs in the forthcoming detailed analysis of SQA results.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the initial analysis of the SQA results and congratulated the young people of Highland on their successes in this year's exams; and
- ii. **AGREED**, with regard to the forthcoming detailed analysis of SQA results, that the possibility of including information on trends in relation to pupils with Additional Support Needs be investigated.

9. Learning Policy 2013 Poileasaidh Ionnsachaidh 2013

Declaration of Interest: Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of Inverness College and left the room.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-69-13 \(440kb pdf\)](#) dated 5 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which summarised the culmination of 20 years of work developing Learning and Teaching policies in Highland. The 2013 version, for the first time, aligned Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment into a single coherent policy.

During discussion, Members referred to a previous request for a presentation on the use of IT, such as webcasting, to teach Modern Languages remotely.

In response, the Chairman confirmed this had been agreed and would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. In the meantime, a Briefing Note on the current position in relation to Modern Languages would be provided to Members of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Highland Learning Policy 2013;
- ii. **AGREED** to endorse the approach being taken in Highland to link curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment in a single coherent policy; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a Briefing Note on the current position in relation to Modern Languages be provided to Members of the Committee.

10. Education Services for Gypsy/Traveller Families – Session 2012/13 Seirbheisean Foghlaim do Theaghlaichean Luchd-siubhail – Seisean 2012/13

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-70-13 \(22kb pdf\)](#) dated 13 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which summarised the work of the Interrupted Learning Development Officer's work with Gypsy/Traveller families in Highland during session 2012-2013.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report, raised the following queries and comments:-

- what were the future plans for this service, in particular for the children that were currently not being engaged with;

- Members welcomed the conspicuous efforts made to involve children from gypsy/traveller families in school and there had been many positive reports of the way in which schools had welcomed these children;
- there were instances of gypsy/traveller mothers teaching their own children who might benefit from additional reading and writing materials and it was queried whether such resources could be made available for those who wished it;
- it was stressed that Scottish gypsy/traveller communities formed an integral part of Highland culture and an important strand in the overall Scottish culture;
- the report made connections with the equalities agenda and demonstrated the very specific efforts that were needed to engage with these communities to ensure that they were fully part of society. It was hoped that this work could be developed with a range of outcomes available for assessment. Since traveller communities tended to suffer from poorer health than mainstream societies, promoting education would have a positive impact on health as well;
- reference was made to a Scottish Parliament Select Committee report which commented on the huge health inequalities for gypsy/traveller communities. It was queried whether there was reference to how the Council would relate to travelling families in For Highland's Children 4 and, if so, if it referred to health inequalities; and
- the Interrupted Learning Development Officer also met regularly with Highland Youth Voice to explain the challenges that gypsy/traveller families faced.

Responding to these queries and comments, it was confirmed that the Interrupted Learning Development Officer worked alone in dealing with this issue and was responsible for the whole of the Highland area. The role of the service was to make contact with and enable children and young people to be engaged in school as quickly as possible. The number of children who were being brought into the school system was increasing year on year and it was a priority to try to make contact with those families who presently did not engage at all with the service.

There was a range of education materials accessible for gypsy/traveller families and could be made available to any traveller family known to the Council.

There was not at present a dedicated Improvement Group for gypsy/traveller families. This had been discussed with the Chief Executive as there used to be a multi-agency planning group focussing on a range of issues connected to gypsy/traveller families. This would be the subject of further consideration and discussion.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the work of the Interrupted Learning Development Officer's work with Gypsy/Traveller families in the past school session.

11. Curriculum for Excellence Update

Fios as Ùr mun Churraicealam airson Sàr-mhathais

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-71-13 \(131kb pdf\)](#) dated 7 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which summarised recent developments in Curriculum for Excellence implementation and outlined priorities for 2013/14.

The Committee **NOTED** the updated inspection advice, changes to exams from 2014 and 2013/14 Curriculum for Excellence priorities.

12. Performance Report – Children’s Services **Aithisg air Dèanadas – Seirbheisean Chloinne**

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-72-13 \(169kb pdf\)](#) dated 6 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which provided an update on the performance framework for Children’s Services.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report which detailed encouraging progress, much of which had come about by integrated working, and commented as follows:-

- it was still felt that the performance measure on breastfeeding was very low and a report providing more information to a future meeting on this was requested;
- the follow-up reports on primary mental health working and child and adolescent mental health were also very encouraging. Considering that the service was meeting its targets and that effort would be made to improve on this favourable situation, clarification was sought as to what processes were to be used to assess and review future performance; and
- while it was acknowledged that HEAT targets for the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service were moving from 26 weeks to 18 weeks for access to a mental health professional, this was still too long to wait for assistance.

In response, the Chairman confirmed his support for further information on trends regarding breastfeeding being brought to the Committee. It would be helpful for the Committee to explore myths and social pressures related to breastfeeding and to consider the impact of welfare reform and pressure to return to work.

It was clarified that the performance indicators were agreed as part of the Performance Framework and which were derived from both local integrated children’s service planning and national HEAT targets for mental health. The Scottish Government had included regular annual reporting on performance indicators in the provisions for the new Children and Young People’s Bill and was addressing the combination of a mixture of local and national indicators. This was being assisted with input from Local Authorities to create a national model for children’s services planning and to consider what the outcomes framework would be.

In terms of the local process, each of the improvement indicators was the focus of one of the Improvement Groups currently working on For Highland Children’s 4. Once the outcomes had been received from the Children’s Services Inspection, expected in December, For Highland Children’s 4 could be published. This would initiate a tranche of new indicators and targets. It was anticipated that changes to improvement indicators would be taken to the Strategic Commissioning Group in March 2014 and thereafter to the Council.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the performance information; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report be prepared for a future meeting detailing issues in relation to achievement of the target for breastfeeding.

13. Respite Arrangements for Children Ullachaidhean Faochaidh do Chloinn

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-73-13 \(99kb pdf\)](#) dated 8 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which focussed on the role of short breaks/respites in ensuring that children and young people were nurtured and included by all of those with key roles in their lives and the lives of their families, enabling them to feel that they belonged, be that in their nursery, school or community. The report outlined the impact of a range of factors resulting in increasing need for short breaks/respites provision and other kinds of support for children with disabilities and their families and the need for continued deployment of resources to support these needs. The impact of implementation of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013 by April 2014 was also taken into consideration.

During a summary of the report, it was confirmed that the Council was now exceeding its targets in the provision of respite. The report provided further detail about the nature of these services and the issues and challenges encountered in providing them. The greatest challenge was how the Service could continue to meet the expectation of families within budgetary constraints. Particularly challenging were the levels of respite expected and the variety and flexibility of respite which now included more personalised models as the Council moved towards providing services based on Self-Directed Support.

During discussion, Members commended the dedication of staff who worked in these very challenging areas and commented on a number of issues as follows:-

- what respite provisions were made for siblings of children with disabilities;
- if any respite provision was offered to families as a starting point prior to interventions coming into effect;
- while it was encouraging to see flexibility and range of provision, it was still not clear whether there were effective feedback loops to ensure that interventions were achieving outcomes;
- if it was possible to provide overnight respite for children within the familiar setting of their own home so as to minimise stress and permit families to benefit from the respite;
- it was acknowledged how busy The Orchard was at present and reference was made to the potential for a residential facility at Inverness Royal Academy; • as Corporate Parents, the Council had a duty not only to recognise the huge benefits of Self-Directed Support but also the challenges it highlighted. In scrutinising figures for establishments such as The Orchard, it was essential to accept that meeting the needs of certain children was a specialised service that might involve many members of staff. Such a specialised service was crucial to the wellbeing of the child and their family – anything less would cause distress for the whole family;
- it was recognised that the Orchard was operating under unprecedented pressure and yet received exceptional reports from the Social Care Inspectorate. While accepting the difficulties in predicting respite needs for the future, there were now increasing numbers of children with complex needs in the Highlands. It should be the Council's

aspiration to replicate the service provided at the Orchard for as many children as possible in the future and yet the Council's 10 year Capital Programme did not include making provision for respite for these children. A suggestion was made that an options appraisal exercise might be worthwhile to assess if an additional new build facility should be pursued;

- while funding packages were available for support for parent carers of children with profound needs, it was proving impossible to find a private provider who could provide staff with the necessary competences and willingness to work with such challenging children - this was now a source of much tension; and
- the measures listed in the report would make a significant difference and reference was made to the additional 8.5 fte staffing resource that had been made to the Children's Disability Service.

Responding to comments and questions, it was confirmed that:-

- there were different kinds of respite/support offered to siblings and there had been an increase in the provision of "Sibshops" events specifically organised to recognise the contributions made by siblings of children with special needs;
- there was a range of services offered to families prior to engaging in interventions, so as to enable them to take stock of their individual situations;
- the issue of the feedback loop was partly addressed by the Child Plan reviews. However, for some time work had been underway to explore a better feedback system gathering information about quality and whether respite had achieved agreed outcomes;
- regarding overnight respite in the home, this was a more complex service provision for private providers. However, Carr Gomm, a not-for-profit company providing services to people with a wide range of support needs, could provide this on occasions. A direct payment could also be used to purchase such a service;
- anticipating future needs for residential respite was complex. However, it was known that families were now seeking more diversity in terms of service provision and presently it was not expected that more families would seek a residential model. There had been some concerns that the development of Self-Directed Support might threaten the current residential provision. However, it was not anticipated that the current users of residential services would choose to make these arrangements themselves. However, there was a need to consolidate existing provisions and develop more diverse alternatives, including a home-based model. This would require flexible budgets to permit families to purchase their own support and was an area that was being kept under review;
- the Council was making progress on local alternatives to out of authority placements. Should it emerge that more local respite and residential provision was needed for young people who would otherwise need to go out of authority, this would be an issue that the Council would be invited to address;
- work was on-going with young adults needing residential respite and Highland Children's Forum had been asked to undertake a consultation with young people; and
- it was acknowledged that part of the challenge of self-directed support was to ensure that the choice available could be met by able and willing service providers.

Following discussion, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the issues raised in the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the continuing challenges in service provision; and
- iii. **AGREED** to commend the good services being provided by staff and partners.

14. Primary and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Prìomh Sheirbheisean Slàinte Inntinn agus Seirbheisean Slàinte Inntinn do Chloinn agus Òganaich

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-74-13 \(45kb pdf\)](#) dated 13 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which explained that in April 2012, as part of the process of integrating care, the Primary Mental Health Worker (PMHW) team transferred from NHS Highland to the Highland Council. The PMHW service was part of the wider Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) within the NHS and was required to meet the expected targets of other CAMHS services in providing intervention for all new referrals within 26 weeks of the referral being made. This had not always been possible for the service and the report provided detail about the issues arising for PMHWs in meeting this target.

During discussion, Members commented on a number of areas as follows:-

- reference was made to the specific responsibility on PMHWs to provide training which accounted for approximately 50% of their time and it was queried whether training levels were the same as in other local authorities and whether this had been contributed to the breaches of the HEAT target that had occurred;
- the report made reference to targets not being met in Lochaber and it was acknowledged that changes that had emerged from service integration had impacted on the work of the PMHW in this location in terms of resources, changes to co-workers and a widened geographical responsibility. It was queried whether this area was appropriately resourced; and
- regarding levels of service, since March 2013, 65 referrals had been received and it was a concern that the service had failed to meet HEAT timeframes for 15% of these referrals. While recognising that there were mitigating circumstances why some of these referrals had not been dealt with within the HEAT timeframes, this seemed nonetheless a high percentage failure rate and assurances were sought that this was being addressed.

Responding to these comments it was clarified that training was also incorporated into time taken in consultation with staff. This was laid out at the time of the PMHW role being established and had remained a key part of the work that they undertook. Building capacity was considered as part of their role so as to identify needs at a much earlier stage.

One of the benefits of bringing together the PMHWs under one management structure had been to assess the roles and responsibilities undertaken and an assessment of the geographic area that they served. It was accepted that the situation in Lochaber required either a realignment of staff or additional staff in the area of preventative spend.

Regarding meeting the HEAT targets, the Chairman gave his assurances that the Council was doing all it could to meet performance expectations. It was also confirmed that there was now a single CAMHS Group that included representatives from the Health Service and

PMHWs who were working together to ensure that progress would be made in meeting this target.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and the commitment to continue to closely monitor access to the Primary Mental Health Worker service with an aim of retaining its focus as an early intervention service.

15. Additional Support Needs Review – Interim Report Ath-sgrùdadh air Feumalachdan Taice a Bharrachd – Aithisg Eadar- mail

There had been circulated joint Report No [ACS-75-13 \(31kb pdf\)](#) dated 13 August 2013 by the Directors of Education, Culture and Sport and Health and Social Care which explained that, as a means of providing a focus on policy, practice and outcomes in supporting pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN) in Highland, to identify where practice could be improved and also what practice was effective in meeting current need, an ASN review was commenced in April 2013. The report summarised the activity to date and provided information on key themes emerging from the review that would be taken forward in the coming session.

During discussion, Members commented on a number of areas as follows:-

- with reference to the membership of the Working Group carrying out the ASN review, a request was made to include a representative from the third sector and a member of the Opposition;
- the report indicated that there were no additional resource implications from the review at this stage and it was requested whether there would be a recognition of the resources needed to fund all the needs that were identified and the emerging needs when the review was brought back to Members; and
- the review focussed on ASN within the school and yet additional needs were evident to enable parents to support their child after school, during holidays and throughout the rest of the child's life. The difficulties encountered in transitions from school to adulthood had been powerfully described in the work "The Silent Doorbell" by Elsie Normington.

Responding to the request to widen the membership of the Working Group carrying out the ASN review, the Chairman agreed to give this his consideration.

It was also confirmed that the review would go a long way to identifying additional resource requirements in the context of infrastructure, the efficiency savings and the model itself.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the review and the work undertaken so far; and
- AGREED** to endorse the range of emerging themes to be further developed in phase 2 of the review.

The Committee adjourned for lunch at 12.50 pm and resumed at 1.30 pm.

16. Psychological Service Update and 2013-2014 Priorities
Fios as Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Shaidhc-eòlais agus Prìomhachasan
2013 – 2014

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-76-13 \(313kb pdf\)](#) dated 16 July 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which gave an update on the work of the Psychological Service during the 2012-2013 session and considered priorities for the coming year, 2013-2014.

Responding to a query, it was confirmed that the Psychological Service worked with the Crocus Group in Inverness which offered support to bereaved children and maintained links with the Highland Hospice.

The Committee **NOTED** the work of the Psychological Service 2012-2013 and the priorities for 2013-2014.

17. Amending the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
Ag Atharrachadh Achd Co-chomhairleachadh Sgoiltean (Alba)
2010

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-77-13 \(22kb pdf\)](#) dated 6 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which set out the background to the consultation on Amending the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and outlined draft responses and supporting rationale.

In discussion, views expressed included that the final decision whether to close a school should remain with Ministers, not delegated to an independent referral mechanism, and that consideration of school closures in rural areas must take account not just of education, but also wider social and economic sustainability issues.

The Committee **AGREED** the Council's response to the consultation as set out in the report, subject to the inclusion of a covering letter setting out concerns raised in discussion.

18. Delivery of role of “Champions”
Libhrigeadh dreuchd “Churaidhean”

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-78-13 \(40kb pdf\)](#) dated 9 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which reviewed the first year of the role of Champions in the current Council Administration. The report detailed the wide range of groups and activities which the champions were involved in and their role in facilitating good communication between the Council, NHS Highland and the people being supported.

Members spoke strongly in support of the energy and commitment of champions. Their work was greatly valued by officers and stakeholders and the integration of Health and Social Care services had also increased the significance of their roles. In response, the Champions' Co-ordinator and Children's Champion acknowledged the wide remit of her post, including liaising with Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People. It was her experience that the best solutions were found at local level and she was hopeful that the introduction of District Childcare Partnerships and Area Committees would prove an effective forum in this regard, especially with the launch of For Highland's Children 4 in the Autumn. All Elected

Members were Corporate Parents and therefore there was the potential to explore how Area Committees could, through this mechanism, champion the interests of children at a local level.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

19. Additional Hours Early Learning and Childcare **Uairean a Bharrachd airson Tràth-ionnsachadh agus Cùram-chloinne**

There had been circulated joint Report No [ACS-79-13 \(18kb pdf\)](#) dated 13 August 2013 by the Directors of Education, Culture and Sport and Health and Social Care which outlined the broad approach being taken in order to meet the requirement to deliver 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare across Highland by August 2014.

The report outlined a number of ways in which the additional hours could be delivered, including extending the hours of existing Primary School wraparound sessions or, in smaller schools, introducing Early Level classes where Nursery 3 and 4 year olds were taught with Primary 1 children, or providing childcare in the holidays. Challenges to implementation would be dealt with through consultation, taking account of community views, perhaps through Local Childcare and Family Resource Partnerships. Staffing structures were currently under review and the increased hours would be fed into the review process. Given the above complexities, it was likely that the increased hours would not be implemented in full until August 2015.

The Director of Health and Social Care commented that the Council was committed to the introduction of the additional hours, which would benefit children, families and communities. Implementation would not be straightforward in every community and the Council would work with Members, parents and local service providers to achieve arrangements best suited to the community. A discussion paper would be brought to each District Partnership.

In discussion, Members spoke in support of the District Partnerships and of the variety of approaches to introducing the additional hours, and commended Childcare and Early Education officers for their hard work and dedication. In response to comments in favour of Early Level classes, Members were advised that this option might not be practical in all schools as appropriate staff and community support would be required.

Arising from discussion, with a view to informing the Council's activities on a political and practical level, information was requested on the main issues currently facing families, particularly in light of changes relating to payments to families and tax credits.

The Committee:-

- i. NOTED** the progress being made with regard to the implementation of 600 hours of early learning and childcare by August 2014; and
- ii. AGREED** that an overview of the current issues facing families accessing childcare be brought to a future meeting.

20. Care Home Services in Tain and Muir of Ord **Seirbheisean Dhachannan Cùraim ann am Baile Dhubhthaich agus sa Bhlàr Dhubh**

There had been circulated Report No [Item 20 ACS-80-13 \(19kb pdf\)](#) dated 29 July 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which provided an update on progress towards new care home provision in Tain and Muir of Ord. The report provided information on timescales, costs and staff transfer arrangements.

Members welcomed the progress being made and attention was drawn to the developing positive relationships between Parklands Highland and local groups. In response to a question, the Director of Health and Social Care confirmed that both new builds would be nursing homes but individuals requiring only Social Care Needs would also be fully integrated. He confirmed that NHS Highland was in dialogue with all private providers with regard to step-up/step-down beds across Highland with the aim of building a stock of such provision across Highland, including both new facilities.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and confirmation of the signing of contracts for new care homes in Tain and Muir of Ord with Parklands Highland Ltd.

21. Notice of Children's Services Inspection **Brath mu Sgrùdadh Sheirbheisean Cloinne**

There had been circulated joint Report No [ACS-81-13 \(32kb pdf\)](#) dated 2 August 2013 by the Directors of Education, Culture and Sport and Health and Social Care which provided notice to Members of a joint inspection of children's services in Highland, due to take place in October/November 2013. The inspection would examine how well public services worked together to improve outcomes for children, especially children in need. The inspection would be "intelligence led" and preparatory work, including a pre-inspection return, was in hand. The focus on inspection-related activity was likely to delay publication of For Highland's Children 4.

The Chairman having welcomed the offer of assistance with the Inspection from the Opposition, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

22. Audit Action Plans **Planaichean-gnìomha Sgrùdaidh**

i. Catering Establishment – System Weaknesses; and School Meals – Income Collection and Monitoring Systems **Ionad Frithealaidh – Laigsean Siostaim, agus Biadh Sgoile – Togail Teachd-a-steach agus Siostaman Sgrùdaidh**

Declaration of Interest: Mrs B McAllister declared a non-financial interest in this item as a family member worked in the School Meals Catering Section but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-82-13 \(160kb pdf\)](#) dated 5 August 2013 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport which provided an overview of the Internal Audit reports relating to the Education, Culture and Sport Service considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2012 and progress with the related management actions agreed at that Committee.

With regard to System Weaknesses in a Catering establishment, it was hoped that the upgrade to the Saffron IT management systems, allowing improved interface with the Council's Oracle Financial systems would be completed by the end of October; until then, manual cash reconciliation would be subjected to close scrutiny and checking. In relation to the audit of School Meals Income Collection and Monitoring Systems, improvements made included the ongoing roll-out of cashless catering systems to all Primary Schools, development of a procedures manual, and measures to prevent the accumulation of outstanding payments for school meals.

In response to a question as to the delay in bringing the report to Committee, when the matters had been reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee almost a year ago, the Chairman gave an undertaking that future reports would be brought more quickly.

The Committee **NOTED** the management actions taken to address the issues identified in the Internal Audit reports.

ii. CareFirst CareFirst

There had been circulated Report No [ACS-83-13 \(31kb pdf\)](#) dated 8 August 2013 by the Director of Health and Social Care which detailed the actions taken to address the Service specific issue raised by Internal Audit regarding the re-use of previous passwords in CareFirst.

Only one issue identified by the audit remained to be addressed. As this related to the CareFirst operating system, remedial action could only be taken by the system provider. An assurance had been given that this would be addressed by January 2014.

In response to a question as to the delay in bringing the report to Committee, when the matters had been reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in November 2012, the Chairman again gave an undertaking that future reports would be brought more quickly. The Chairman also gave an assurance that Member comments that audit reports should include an Action Plan, presented as a landscape table, would be taken forward.

Dr M Somerville having stated that the CareFirst issue was important to NHS Highland staff and action by this Committee was helpful in ensuring issues were addressed, the Committee **NOTED** the content of the audit report and the proposed solution to address the issue raised.

23. Conference for Local Authority Church Representatives Co-labhairt airson Rìochdairean Eaglais Ùghdarras Ionadail

Having **NOTED** there was no conference fee, the Committee **APPROVED** the attendance of Mr G Smith at the Church of Scotland Conference for Local Authority Church Representatives on 19 September 2013 in Edinburgh.

24. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED**, and **APPROVED** where necessary, the following Minutes of Meetings:-

- i.** Criminal Justice Sub-Committee of [30 May 2013 \(20kb pdf\)](#); and
- ii.** Child Protection Committee of [4 June 2013 \(28kb pdf\)](#).

The meeting concluded at 1.55 pm.