

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Committee Room, Fourth Floor, Council Building, 2 High Street, Perth on Wednesday 13 February 2013 at 2.00pm.

Present: Councillors A Stewart, M Barnacle, D Doogan, A Munro (substituting for A MacLellan), B Vaughan and A Younger.

In Attendance: G Taylor, M Cochlan, J Jarvie and P Frazer (all Chief Executive's Service); B Atkinson, and J Gilchrist (both Education and Children's Services); A Harrow and A Taylor (both Housing and Community Care) and B Renton (the Environment Service).

Apologies for Absence: Councillors D Cuthbert and A MacLellan.

Councillor A Stewart, Convener, Presiding

87. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

88. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

(i) Scrutiny Committee

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Committee of 21 November 2012 was submitted, approved as a correct record and authorised for signature.

Matters Arising

(a) Six Monthly Business Management and Improvement Plan Performance Exception Reports (Art 585 refers)

Councillor Doogan commented that he had been expecting an update from the Environment Service in respect of vacant properties in Perth and Kinross. B Renton agreed to provide Councillor Doogan with an update.

(ii) Audit Sub-Committee

The minute of meeting of the Audit Sub-Committee of 12 September 2012 was submitted and noted. (*Appendix I*)

(iii) Audit Sub-Committee

The minute of meeting of the Audit Sub-Committee of 14 November 2012 was submitted and noted. (*Appendix II*)

89. STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2011/12

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (13/12) reflecting on the activities of the Service over the past year and presenting an overview of the Service's key strengths and areas for improvement.

B Atkinson advised that Report 13/12 provided a useful summary of the statutory reporting requirements in respect of standards and quality and demonstrated how an integrated Education and Children's Services (ECS) supported all aspects of a child's life. The report should provide reassurance to the Committee that the Service was working to address areas of improvement and included case examples highlighting where a difference had been made.

Councillor Younger, whilst commending the improvements and recommendations contained in the report, queried what performance comparators were used in the evaluation. B Atkinson responded that a system was in place across Scotland whereby Perth and Kinross was compared against other Scottish local authorities with a similar population profile. Councillor Doogan asked if there was a way of comparing our performance with higher achieving local authorities in order to raise standards. B Atkinson recognised that it would be useful to look at the best performing schools in Scotland to see what could be learned from them and arrangements were being made for the headmaster of a highly performing school to visit Perth and Kinross in the near future.

Councillor Doogan, whilst noting that the community campus libraries had been very well received, queried whether ECS had been able to quantify the value of the Fergusson Gallery to Perth and Kinross. B Atkinson agreed that all the campus libraries had been well-received and were performing well. However, performance was measured using the national standard of footfall, which was not necessarily a good measure of value. A broader assessment of the views of library users, and non-users, would need to be undertaken in order to assess their value. The Big Listen, a public consultation held from 1 September to 14 October 2011, provided an opportunity to obtain people's views on the Council's cultural services. Some changes had been made as a result of the consultation exercise, for example the introduction of baskets in libraries, and opening hours were due to be reviewed. B Atkinson considered that although the importance of the collection at the Fergusson Gallery was difficult to measure through cost and footfall alone, it was of high value to the Council.

Councillor Doogan referred to Table 1 on page 36 of Report 13/12 and asked why there had been a slight drop in P4 pupils making progress at level 1. B Atkinson confirmed that the figures were due to a change in pupil numbers which had affected the sample size. Councillor Doogan acknowledged that good work had been done under the Curriculum for Excellence in terms of enterprise and vocational learning; however, he was concerned about the level of financial education young people were receiving particularly in terms of budgeting. B Atkinson responded that, with the introduction of the Welfare Reform Act 2012, social education was even more important in helping young people to tackle the challenges they faced. The Curriculum for Excellence had been an opportunity to recognise the wider

achievement of preparing young people for the world rather than one particular aspect and the Council was already providing young people with advice on housing where homelessness might be an issue. Councillor Doogan requested more details on what information was provided to young people on how to plan and manage their finances.

Councillor Vaughan advised that all HMle Inspection reports were scrutinised by the Lifelong Learning Committee Executive Sub-Committee and members of the Scrutiny Committee were welcome to attend a future meeting to observe the work of the Sub-Committee. In terms of HMle performance indicators, the Council expected good or better as the benchmark, in order to assess that improvements were being made. Therefore the Council should be looking at the best performers in Scotland and looking to emulate their achievements. Councillor Vaughan noted that the current review of the Single Outcome Agreement and the Lifelong Learning Partnership could reflect how national priorities and outcomes for older people were addressed in future. B Atkinson confirmed that ECS was currently reviewing all learning programmes to reflect the importance of adult learning and the benefits for older people; however, work was still needed to develop links with Housing and Community Care in working with older people.

Councillor Younger noted that technology changed very quickly and asked if ECS's plans were achievable and if IT services were being reviewed for sustainability. B Atkinson acknowledged that keeping pace with evolving technologies presented a challenge; however IT services had been reviewed to ensure that the service was as effective as possible. It may be necessary to review the skill base in the future and outsource specialist expertise if necessary.

Councillor Stewart referred to page 39 of Report 13/12 and sought clarification on the impact on Fairview School by attracting more pupils with additional support needs. B Atkinson confirmed that the success of Fairview School had resulted in families coming into Perth to access the resources available. It did, however, put some pressure on existing resources at Fairview School as it could be challenging to support children with additional needs in mainstream schools. Resources would need to be looked at in the future to ensure that a balance could be maintained within the School. In response to a question from Councillor Doogan, B Atkinson confirmed that each child with additional support needs would have an individual care plan, which would be reviewed in order to assess what their needs were. The aim was to do what was right for each child and, on occasion, that might not be mainstream school; some parents may suggest alternative arrangements outwith the main school programme.

Council Barnacle referred to the reported increase in child protection referrals and queried if this was due to an increasing number of incidents or a greater recognition of the problem. B Atkinson confirmed that it was a combination of the two factors; there was a much greater awareness in schools of domestic violence and substance misuse issues that may impact on children, and increased reporting of child protection issues.

Resolved:

- (i) The content of Report 13/12 be noted.

- (ii) Instruct the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to provide further information to members of the Committee on the learning and support available to young people on financial planning and management.

90. PROCUREMENT CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT: UPDATE REPORT 2012

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Housing and Community Care) (13/68) summarising progress made during the financial year 2011/12 against the objectives set out in the Procurement Strategy 2011-15 (Report 11/316 refers). The report detailed the scores attained by the Council for Procurement Capability following an assessment conducted in October 2012.

A Taylor acknowledged that it was not clear from Report 11/316 what had been achieved to date, and what was yet to be completed. However, he confirmed that the actions identified in Appendix 1 were still outstanding and would be taken forward in the forthcoming year.

Councillor Doogan noted that the Council's capability scoring of 54% was only just in the improved performance category, and he sought clarification on what was being done to address the poorest performing area of contractor and supplier management. A Harrow responded that it was now possible to establish who was undertaking the contract and identify procurement down to officer level, which enabled support to be provided where necessary. A Taylor confirmed that the goal was to achieve superior performance (75% - 100%) by 2015.

In addition, Councillor Doogan expressed concern that it appeared that only 27% of the Council's procurement activity was being undertaken at a local level, and that 38% of goods were procured outwith Scotland. However, it was not clear from the report what goods and services could not be supplied in Scotland. A Taylor responded that officers were attempting to procure locally, particularly using Quick Quote to a certain price point; however, often no bids would be received as there were no local companies able to supply the goods required. Councillor Doogan asked if it was possible to bundle-up contracts to appeal to larger companies that could sub-contract work to smaller local suppliers. A Harrow confirmed that attempts were being made to target specific areas; however, economies of scale were an important factor and there was still a lot to learn about the local market's potential. Councillor Stewart acknowledged that the Council could do a lot better in local procurement and that this could be achieved by identifying gaps in the market or supporting people to open new businesses.

In response to a question from Councillor Younger, A Harrow confirmed that Renfrewshire was currently the lead authority with a capability scoring of 72% and that NHS Tayside had achieved 92%. He confirmed that officers were working with representatives of these bodies to seek to learn improved practice.

Resolved:

Instruct the Executive Director (Housing and Community Care) to provide a presentation on the Procurement Capability Assessment process for a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.

91. FOURTH SCRUTINY REVIEW: MEMBER OFFICER GROUPS

There was submitted a report by the Depute Director (Environment Service) (13/69) outlining the scope of the fourth scrutiny review to be undertaken by the Scrutiny Committee. The purpose of the review is to examine the effectiveness of Member Officer Groups (MOGs) and how they could be improved to support the delivery of better outcomes for local communities.

Resolved:

- (i) The terms of Report 13/69, including the scope and terms of reference outlined in Appendix 1 to Report 13/69, be approved; and
- (ii) That a final report and findings from the review would be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee on 12 June 2013.

