

SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Minute of hybrid meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee held in the Council Chambers, 2 High Street, Perth, on Wednesday 30 November 2022 at 2:00pm.

Present: Councillor C Stewart, Councillors K Allan, S Carr, A Forbes, M Frampton, D Illingworth (Substituting for F Smith), B Leishman (Substituting for Bailie A Bailey), I MacPherson (Substituting for E Drysdale), I Massie and W Robertson.

In Attendance: L Simpson (Head of Legal and Governance Services), B Renton (Executive Director, Communities); S Devlin (Executive Director, Education and Children's Services), B Atkinson, P Davison, R Drummond and S Johnston (all Education and Children's Services); A Brown, J Clark, C Guild, J Guild and M Pasternak (all Corporate and Democratic Services).

Apologies: Bailie A Bailey, Councillors E Drysdale and F Smith.

Councillor C Stewart, Convener, Presiding.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Convener welcomed all those present to the meeting and apologies were noted as above.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE OF 21 SEPTEMBER 2022

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee of 21 September 2022 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

4. OUTSTANDING BUSINESS STATEMENT

Resolved:

The status of actions in the Outstanding Business Statement, be noted and completed actions removed accordingly.

5. COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2021-22

There was submitted a report by Head of Legal and Governance Services (22/292) providing assurance that the Council has an adequate and effective Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in place and advising the Committee of work undertaken to improve performance in relation to the Council's handling of complaints. The report also advised public performance reporting requirements are satisfied in accordance with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) performance measures for local authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor Carr regarding the availability of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) review and conclusions to the Committee, J Clark advised this information is made publicly available by SPSO. L Simpson confirmed no business pertained to any cases for PKC in 2021/22 and therefore no information has been reported to Committee on this occasion.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart regarding SPSO reports being brought to the next available Committee after receipt, rather than on an annual basis, L Simpson confirmed this could be possible going forward, however it should be noted SPSO are currently operating with a backlog.

In response to a question from Councillor Robertson regarding lessons learnt from complaints received, J Clark confirmed Stage 2 complaints are reviewed by the Corporate Complaints Team Leader who will compile relevant learning points and share feedback with relevant teams. J Clark further advised there is a Complaints Handling Group comprising representatives from all Services who meet regularly to identify and share learning points.

In response to a question from Councillor Leishman regarding timescales for handling complaints and comparison with other Local Authorities, J Clark advised elementary benchmarking information is routinely compiled, however, as not all Local Authorities collect data in the same way, the comprehensiveness and accuracy of this is variable. J Clark further advised that the Local Authority Complaint Handler's Network is in the process of reviewing this to ensure the information produced is meaningful.

In response to a question from Councillor Allan regarding the 34% increase in complaints received from 2020/21 to 2021/22, L Simpson confirmed that during 2020/21 staff were redeployed to essential business due to the Covid Pandemic and there was therefore a condensed period during which complaints were being processed. When compared to the full duration of 2021/22, this appears as a marked increase. L Simpson assured Members there is no concern of systemic failure.

In response to a question from Councillor Massie regarding monetary compensation and the financial implications of this, L Simpson confirmed monetary compensation does not form part of the CHP.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart regarding complaints remaining open at the end of March 2022, J Clark confirmed no complaints remain open within the Council from 2021/22.

In response to a question from Councillor Shiers regarding the way in which the Council receives and responds to complaints given the prevalence of social media, L Simpson advised work has been ongoing to ensure all communications which resemble a complaint, regardless of how they are received, are dealt with through the CHP.

Resolved:

- (i) The contents of Report 22/292, be considered.
- (ii) It be noted that the Council's Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is considered to be adequate and effective.

- (iii) It be noted that the CHP will continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the year and work undertaken to further improve performance.

6. PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING UPDATE 2022

There was submitted a report by the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (22/268) providing an update on progress made in Perth and Kinross, to close the poverty-related attainment gap through the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). The report outlined the range of PEF funded measures implemented to improve performance and monitor progress of improvements. It meets the requirements to report on the expenditure and impact of the Pupil Equity Fund.

In response to a question from Councillor Leishman regarding outdoor learning at primary schools in Perth and Kinross, S Devlin confirmed all nursery, primary and secondary schools are encouraged to participate in forms of outdoor learning. In response to a further question from Councillor Leishman regarding numbers of teachers able to deliver outdoor learning and the timescales for staff being trained to do so, S Devlin confirmed different schools have received training from a range of providers.

In response to a question from Councillor Allan regarding one school which did not receive any PEF, S Devlin confirmed this would be due to there being no eligible pupils within the school. Allocation is based on eligibility for free school meals and qualifying benefits. P Davison confirmed the school in question was Logiealmond Primary School.

In response to a question from Councillor Shiers regarding measurement of PEF through a bespoke tracking tool, what data this measures and how this impacts future decisions regarding PEF allocation, S Johnston confirmed the Closing the Gap tool has been piloted for three years within Perth and Kinross. Work has been ongoing with the Education Scotland Attainment Advisor to strengthen the ability to evidence whether interventions are working or not. Staff are trained in measures to be used before tracking takes place throughout the school year. This has proven to be successful, and requests have been received nationally for the Council to share their progress with other Local Authorities.

In response to a question from Councillor Carr regarding school management teams' awareness of how best to use PEF, S Devlin confirmed evidence-based support and guidance is provided to all Headteachers in relation to judicious use of PEF to ensure the best outcomes possible for Children and Young People in every school.

Resolved:

The contents of Report 22/268, be scrutinised.

7. RAISING ATTAINMENT UPDATE

There was submitted a report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (22/267) which provided an update to progress on the Education and Children's Services Raising Attainment Strategy 2020-23. Specifically, information was

provided on a range of performance measures across the National Improvement Framework for Education priorities.

In response to a question from Councillor Shiers, regarding statistics for attendance at school post-pandemic, provision of parental support and measures to support home learning for those who continue to require it, S Johnston confirmed attendance post-pandemic is a national issue. S Johnston advised some young people are successfully continuing to learn from home and programmes of staged intervention have been developed in conjunction with Educational Psychology. S Johnston also advised a framework for emotional based absence has been developed in conjunction with Perth Autism Support. With regard to mixed attenders, S Johnson confirmed work is ongoing with families, and Community Learning Assistants and Pupil Care and Welfare Officers have been appointed in primary schools and secondary schools, respectively. Their remit is to work with families to ensure support to attend regularly is provided. Finally, S Johnston advised work has recently begun with Local Authorities in Tayside and Forth Valley to form a joint approach to managing attendance.

In response to a question from Councillor Forbes regarding a stretch aim for exclusions and whether this will encourage teachers to not exclude when this may be the best course of action, S Devlin advised young people being at school provides several protective factors and it is therefore reasonable to set targets to reduce exclusions as far as possible. S Johnston confirmed exclusion is an act of last resort and statutory legislation is in place regarding this.

In response to a question from Councillor Leishman regarding children starting nursery school who have not met developmental milestones, S Johnston advised there is a Universal Pathway identifying developmental milestones from birth. Nurseries work closely with Health Visitors and information is shared on children who may not be meeting developmental milestones prior to them entering early education in order that a support plan be developed.

In response to a question from Councillor Robertson regarding home schooling, S Johnston advised this is a parental choice. There is no requirement for the Council to give permission for this to take place. If a child initially attends school before changing to home schooling, the Council has a duty to review a home school plan for the child and offer to monitor and support the parent.

Resolved:

The contents of Report 22/267, be scrutinised.

8. PERTH AND KINROSS CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2021/2022

There was submitted a report by Chief Social Work Officer (22/293) providing an overview of the key activities and work of the Child Protection Committee (CPC) partners to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation and describing the CPC's achievements, key strengths and areas for improvement. The report also included an update on the CPC's Improvement Plan, confirming that the

CPC continues to focus on learning and improvement and has in place a comprehensive programme of improvement work for 2022 and beyond.

In response to a question from Councillor Shiers regarding Trio of Risk data and links made between the Child Protection Committee and services with waiting lists to expedite support and direct resources accordingly, B Atkinson advised the Trio of Risk focuses on intervention with children whose parents have issues surrounding substance misuse, mental health or domestic violence. If children are involved with Social Work Services and require a Care Plan or Child Protection Plan, areas of risk are identified as part of this, and agencies will be invited to work together and discuss progress of all key components.

In response to a question from Councillor Stewart regarding the Trio of Risk and main difficulties, B Atkinson advised timing of availability of services can be a key issue. Delays and pressures in different areas can create challenges, especially balancing support for a child with the pace of their parent's recovery.

Resolved:

The contents of Report 22/293, be scrutinised.