

# **SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

Minute of hybrid meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee held in the Council Chambers, 2 High Street, Perth, on Monday 11 December 2023 at 14.30pm.

Present: Councillor C Stewart, Bailie A Bailey, Councillors K Allan, S Carr, Depute Provost A Parrott (substituting for Councillor E Drysdale), N Freshwater (substituting for Councillor C Shiers), A Forbes, I Massie, W Robertson, F Smith, and J Welch.

In Attendance: B Renton (Executive Director, Communities); L Simpson, Strategic Lead – Legal and Governance; D Littlejohn, Strategic Lead- Economy, Development and Planning; B Wilson and K Smith (Communities); B Atkinson, G Doogan, R Drummond, H Robertson, and D Macluskey (all Education and Children’s Services); J Mayglothling, K Molley, A Brown, and M Pasternak (all Corporate and Democratic Services).

Apology: Councillors E Drysdale and C Shiers

Councillor C Stewart, Convener, Presiding.

The Convener led discussion on Items 1- 5 & 8-9 and the Vice-Convener led discussion on items 6- 7.

## **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

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

## **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

## **3. MINUTES**

### **3(i) MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE OF 13 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The minute of meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee of 13 September 2023 was submitted and approved as a correct record.

### **3(ii) MINUTE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE OF 22 NOVEMBER 2023**

The minute of special meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee of 22 November 2023 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. PLANNING PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 12 (2022-23)**

There was submitted a report by Strategic Lead – Economy, Development and Planning (23/369) providing an overview of performance statistics and evidence of continuous improvement for the Planning Service (PPF 12).

In response to a question from Depute Provost A Parrot regarding the age profile of the planning workforce, D Littlejohn confirmed that the recruitment and retention of professionals had been a challenge across services in Local Authorities. D Littlejohn advised that work had been underway at a national level with a look at introducing a modern apprentice scheme for Planners and post graduate opportunities into the planning profession. Work had also been underway with local secondary schools to promote and interest young people in planning.

In response to a question from Councillor A Forbes regarding consultation and engagement with communities regarding the Big Place Conversation events, B Wilson advised that there had been a mixture of events consisting of informal drop-in sessions, more detailed workshops, in person events and digital sessions. B Wilson confirmed that attendance rates were mixed, and some areas received a better turnout than others but overall, the events were a success in engaging with communities. B Wilson confirmed that data of the Big Place Conversation events would be shared, and findings would be assessed to see what worked well and what could be tweaked for the next round of engagement with communities.

In response to a question from the Convener regarding the Planning Users Forum, B Wilson advised that the Planning Users Forum consists of agents who submit smaller applications on a regular basis and Community Councils who are engaged and respond to local applications. B Wilson confirmed that even though there had been some overlap with the House Builders Forum, the two Forums have been kept separate due to the different scales in development and to allow for more productive discussions. B Wilson added that work had also been underway to arrange focus sessions on road construction consent processes and validation workshops for regular agents.

**Resolved:**

- (i) The appended Planning Performance Framework, be noted.
- (ii) Suggestions in relation to service improvements to be included in PPF13, or its successor, be considered.

#### **6. COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2022-23**

There was submitted a report by Strategic Lead - Legal and Governance (23/370) providing assurance that the Council has an adequate and effective Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in place, and; (2) advising the Committee of

work undertaken to improve our performance in relation to the Council's handling of complaints.

In response to a question from Councillor A Forbes regarding the increasing number of complaints in Perth and Kinross Council and are there sufficient staffing resources in place, J Mayglothling confirmed that other Local Authorities and the Ombudsman have noted an increase in complaints. J Mayglothling added that through the Transformation Programme work had been underway to look at how complaints could be addressed differently by concentrating resources for investigations through a central team which would allow for more coverage and help reduce any gaps in the process.

In response to a question from Councillor K Allan regarding a breakdown in complaint figures to see if there are any trends in certain areas, J Mayglothling advised that Services with face-to-face interactions receive more complaints than other areas. L Simpson further explained that many complaints reflect dissatisfaction with a decision or outcome as opposed to a service or process failure. She confirmed that complaints are monitored within Services and the Corporate Team to reduce the number of repeat complaints. The Vice-Convener requested for the breakdown in the 2022-23 complaint figures to be shared with members following the meeting.

In response to a question from Depute Provost A Parrott regarding the number of complaints prior to the pandemic, L Simpson confirmed that work had been undertaken prior to the pandemic to help services properly identify communications which should be classed and managed as a complaint, which resulted in a steady increase in numbers. L Simpson added the figures for 2020 and 2021 were artificially depressed as a consequence of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, explaining that for parts of the period, essential only were operating and that complaints were not being processed. J Mayglothling added that figures have now settled back to pre-Covid levels..

The Convener asked for a briefing note to be shared with Elected Members regarding the number of complaint cases investigated by the SPSO when data has become available to allow for better scrutiny and an increased level of assurance that the correct measures are in place.

**Resolved:**

- (i) The contents of Report 23/370, be considered.
- (ii) It be noted that the performance of the Complaints Handling Procedure to continue to be monitored and reviewed throughout the year.

## **7. PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING UPDATE 2023**

There was submitted a report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (23/281) (1) 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) and; (2) outlining the range of PEF measures implemented to improve performance and monitor progress of improvements.

In response to a question from Councillor K Allan regarding the increase in number of interventions recorded, D Macluskey advised that through the development

of the tracking tool, impacts can now be measured more accurately which has shown positive results.

In response to a question from Councillor A Forbes regarding attendance in schools, D Macluskey advised that work had been undertaken to revise the Council's Attendance Framework to include a staged intervention approach. D Macluskey confirmed that an Attendance Forum had also been arranged for 15 January 2024 with two follow up events to collate data on attendance and look to reduce any gaps in current processes. In response to a follow up question from Councillor A Forbes, D Macluskey advised that early indications in Term 1 had shown improvements in attendance in schools across Perth and Kinross, however, certain sectors and certain year groups are more impacted than others. Education and Children's Services continue to monitor levels of attendance throughout schools and attendance continues to be a key action area in Perth and Kinross Council's Education Improvement Plan and Raising Attainment Strategy.

In response to a question from Bailie A Bailey regarding the decrease in attendance levels prior to Covid pandemic, D Macluskey confirmed that the trend in results prior to the pandemic were due to the development in tools to measure attendance of certain groups and analyse the root causes of poor levels of attendance. D Macluskey added that attendance had been a concern nationally for several years, but attendance issues had increased due to impacts of the pandemic.

In response to another question from Bailie A Bailey regarding the Interventions Mapping Tool, D Macluskey advised that the Mapping Tool had been developed by Perth and Kinross Officers with support from the Scottish Government Attainment Adviser. D Macluskey added that the Interventions Mapping Tool had been identified as National Best Practice and had been shared on several Forums with colleagues in other Local Authorities.

Members thanked Education and Children's Services for their positive work in utilising the Pupil Equity Funding.

**Resolved:**

The contents of the Report 23/281, be scrutinised.

## **8. RAISING ATTAINMENT UPDATE**

There was submitted a report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) (23/280) providing an update to progress on the Education and Children's Services Raising Attainment Strategy 2020-202 and specifically providing information on a range of performance measures across the National Improvement Framework (NIF) for education priorities.

In response to a question from Councillor K Allan regarding the overall decline in performance of developmental milestones, G Doogan advised there had been several steps taken to support children as they enter Primary 1. G Doogan added that specific work had been undertaken with a focus on language and speech by employing additional staff and offering further training to support children in Primary 1. G Doogan added that motor skills are also being addressed by encouraging learning through play in classrooms and by making adaptations to the school curriculum. G Doogan

confirmed that the 9 developmental milestones continue to be monitored and assessed. In response to a supplementary question from Councillor K Allan, G Doogan advised that teachers are trained to offer appropriate support and differentiated learning for children who don't have any early learning and childcare experience before starting Primary School.

In response to a question from the Convener regarding the table on 'Nat 5, Higher and AH Pass rates (A to C) PKC, National and Comparator Authorities' and if the Advanced Higher results should be a concern, D Macluskey confirmed that Perth and Kinross Council had received more D awards than previous years but work had been underway with schools to ensure that results do not become a pattern.

**Resolved:**

The contents of the Report 23/280, be scrutinised.

THERE FOLLOWED A SHORT RECESS AND THE MEETING RECONVENED AT 15.55.

**9. PERTH AND KINROSS CHILD PROTECTION COMMITTEE STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2022/2023**

There was submitted a report by Chief Social Work Officer (23/371) providing an overview of the key activities and work of the CPC partners to protect children and young people from harm, abuse and exploitation; (2) describing the CPC's achievements, key strengths and areas for improvement, and; (3) including an update on the CPC's new Improvement Plan, confirming that the CPC continues to focus on learning and improvement, and has in place, a comprehensive programme of improvement work for 2023 and beyond.

In response to a question from Councillor W Robertson regarding work undertaken with all members of a family when difficulties are discovered, B Atkinson referred to Family Group Decision Making, supported by Social Workers and which would allow for interested parties within the family to provide positive contributions. H Robertson added that addressing the volume of referrals can be timely due to limited resources and the amount of information that must be gathered and assessed on the individual child and their family circumstances. H Robertson confirmed that the Service work through the GIRFEC agenda to ensure that children are safe and protected in a healthy environment.

In response to a question from Councillor S Carr regarding support offered to families seeking asylum or for those whose first language may not be English, H Robertson confirmed that accommodation for the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children had been a success and specific support had also been provided to Ukrainian children and their parents living in Perth and Kinross. There had been no child protection issues identified. H Robertson added that for families whose first language may not be English, carers are recruited from different cultural backgrounds for children who may need to be removed from their family of origin. Issues with translation continue to be monitored carefully.

In response to a question from Bailie A Bailey regarding further information on the work undertaken in relation to unborn child cases and if there are any gaps in current processes, B Atkinson advised that an Unborn Baby Protocol had been developed and underpinned by multi-agency training to try and ensure that those who come across a pregnant vulnerable woman know how to make a referral. B Atkinson added that work had been underway to assess how cases could be handled more efficiently and training continues to be provided and guidance updated as appropriate. R Drummond added that within NHS Tayside, anti-natal and post-natal services are very alert to vulnerable pregnant young women and ongoing work continues to raise awareness of the Unborn Baby Protocol.

**Resolved:**

The Perth and Kinross CPC Standards and Quality Report 2022/2023 (Appendix 1) and the contents of the Perth and Kinross CPC Improvement Plan 1 April 2023 – 31 July 2026 (Update) (Appendix 2) of Report 23/371, be scrutinised.

The Convener referred to H Robertson and R Drummond's last meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee. Members thanked them for their contributions over the years and wished them well for the future.

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