

Minute

Education, Leisure and Housing Committee

Wednesday, 7 September 2022, 09:30.

Council Chamber, Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall.



Present

Councillors Gwenda M Shearer, Jean E Stevenson, Graham A Bevan, Stephen G Clackson, Alexander G Cowie, Steven B Heddle, James R Moar, John A R Scott, James W Stockan and Heather N Woodbridge.

Church Representatives

Reverend Susan Kirkbride and Reverend Fraser Macnaughton.

Teacher Representatives

Jo Hill and Mary Maley.

Present via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

Church Representative

Marie Locke.

Clerk

- Hazel Flett, Service Manager (Governance).

In Attendance

- Erik Knight, Head of Finance.
- Claire Meakin, Interim Head of Education.
- Frances Troup, Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing.
- Edward Abbott-Halpin, Principal, Orkney College (for Items 1 to 6).
- Steven Arnold, Service Manager (Support for Learning and Inclusion) (for Items 1 to 6).
- Garry Burton, Service Manager (Leisure and Culture Service) (for Items 1 to 6).
- David Brown, Service Manager (Resources).
- Morag Miller, Service Manager (Primary Education) (for Items 1 to 6).
- Lesley Mulraine, Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation).
- Kerry Spence, Service Manager (Community Learning, Development and Employability).
- Sheila Tulloch, Service Manager (Legal Services).
- Nick Hewitt, Team Leader (Culture) (for Items 1 to 6).
- Nigel Fyffe, Senior Maintenance Surveyor.

In Attendance via remote link (Microsoft Teams)

- James Wylie, Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

Apologies

- Councillor Rachael A King.
- Councillor Ivan A Taylor.

Declarations of Interest

- No declarations of interest were intimated.

Chair

- Councillor Gwenda M Shearer.

1. Revenue Expenditure Outturn

After consideration of a joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Noted:

1.1. The revenue expenditure outturn statement in respect of Education, Leisure and Housing for financial year 2021/22, attached as Annex 1 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, indicating the following:

- A net General Fund underspend of £979,200.
- A net Non-General Fund underspend of £401,600.

The Committee scrutinised:

1.2. The explanations given and actions proposed in respect of significant budget variances, as outlined in the Budget Action Plan, attached as Annex 2 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, and obtained assurance that appropriate action was taken with regard to significant budget variances.

Councillor Steven B Heddle joined and left the meeting during discussion of this item.

2. Revenue Expenditure Monitoring

After consideration of a joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Noted:

2.1. The revenue financial summary statement in respect of Education, Leisure and Housing for the period 1 April to 30 June 2022, attached as Annex 1 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, indicating the following:

- A net General Fund underspend of £207,600.
- A net Non-General Fund underspend of £121,800.

2.2. The revenue financial detail by service area statement, in respect of Education, Leisure and Housing for the period 1 April to 30 June 2022, attached as Annex 2 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance.

The Committee scrutinised:

2.3. The explanations given and actions proposed in respect of significant budget variances, as outlined in the Budget Action Plan, attached as Annex 3 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, and obtained assurance that action was being taken with regard to significant budget variances.

3. National Improvement Framework

Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Interim Head of Education, the Committee:

Noted:

3.1. That, in December 2021, the Scottish Government published the latest update on progress in relation to the National Improvement Framework.

3.2. The draft summary of progress made locally in relation to the National Improvement Framework, as well as an outline of next steps, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

3.3. That the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23, attached as Appendix 1 to this Minute, be approved for submission to the Scottish Government by 30 September 2022.

The Committee noted:

3.4. That, due to the time constraints involved, the Chief Executive would be requested to exercise emergency powers to authorise submission of the National Improvement Framework: Orkney Islands Council Report and Plan 2022/23, referred to at paragraph 3.3 above, prior to approval by Council.

4. Community Learning and Development Partners Plan – Update

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, together with an Equality Impact Assessment, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Community Learning, Development and Employability), the Committee:

Noted:

4.1. The statutory requirement placed on local authorities by the Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013 to publish a Community Learning and Development (CLD) plan every three years describing how they would co-ordinate and secure adequate and efficient CLD provision with other sector partners.

4.2. That, on 5 October 2021, the Council adopted the Community Learning and Development Plan for Orkney 2021 to 2024, in so far as it related to the remit of the Council, and agreed that an annual review and update of the plan should be submitted to the Committee to ensure it remained effective and relevant to emerging needs.

The Committee scrutinised:

4.3. The annual review of the Orkney Community Learning and Development Partners Plan 2021 to 2024, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that effective progress was being made.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

4.4. That the revised Orkney Community Learning and Development Partners Plan 2021 to 2024, attached as Appendix 2 to this Minute, which had been updated by partners of the Orkney Strategic Community Learning Group, be approved, in so far as it related to the remit of the Council.

Jo Hill and Mary Maley left the meeting at this point.

5. College Management Council Sub-committee

After consideration of the draft Minute of the Meeting of the College Management Council Sub-committee held on 22 August 2022, copies of which had been circulated, the Committee:

Resolved, on the motion of Councillor Gwenda M Shearer, seconded by Councillor Jean E Stevenson, to approve the Minute of the Meeting of the College Management Council Sub-committee held on 22 August 2022, attached as Appendix 3 to this Minute, as a true record.

6. Proposed Administrative Changes to Culture Fund

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Team Leader (Culture), the Committee:

Noted:

6.1. That, in 2021, an internal review of the Culture Fund was undertaken to ensure that the fund continued to be fit for purpose.

6.2. The key recommendations arising from the internal review of the Culture Fund, namely to adopt national best practice in the culture, heritage, and arts sectors via:

- Widening membership of the assessment panel to include external sector experts.
- Operating assessment systems and review cycles amended to be in line with national frameworks recommended by Creative Scotland, the public body supporting the arts, screen and creative industries across the country.

6.3. Current membership of the assessment panel, which made recommendations to the Corporate Director of Education, Leisure and Housing on awards of grant funding from the Culture Fund Open Pot, as detailed in section 4.2.1 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

6.4. That, to align the Culture Fund Open Pot with national recognised best practice, the delivery timetable for the Culture Fund be moved from a January to March process to a June to October process, with grants being dispersed at the beginning of the following financial year rather than retrospectively.

6.5. That membership of the assessment panel be extended to include the following:

- One representative from Voluntary Action Orkney.
- One representative from Creative Scotland.
- One representative from Museums Galleries Scotland.

Reverend Susan Kirkbride and Reverend Fraser Macnaughton left the meeting at this point.

7. Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Repairs and Maintenance Programme – Expenditure Outturn

After consideration of a joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted the summary position of expenditure incurred against the approved revenue repairs and maintenance programme in respect of the Housing Revenue Account for financial year 2021/22, as detailed in section 4.2 of the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, indicating an overspend of £328,200 as at 31 March 2022, against an approved budget totalling £1,464,200.

8. Housing Revenue Account

Revenue Repairs and Maintenance Programme – Expenditure Maintenance

After consideration of a joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

8.1. The summary position of expenditure incurred, as at 30 June 2022, against the approved revenue repairs and maintenance programme in respect of the Housing Revenue Account, as detailed in section 4.2 of the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance.

The Committee scrutinised:

8.2. The explanations given in respect of significant budget variances, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the joint report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing and the Head of Finance, and obtained assurance on progress being made with delivery of the approved revenue repairs and maintenance programme in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

9. Tenant Satisfaction Survey

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation), the Committee:

Noted:

9.1. That a wholesale tenant satisfaction survey was required by the Scottish Social Housing Charter, the process for which was detailed and prescriptive for landlords with up to 1,500 tenants, including achieving a return rate of 40%.

9.2. That the results of tenant satisfaction surveys were used by the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of the process of regulating Local Authority Housing Services.

9.3. That, between March and May 2022, a tenant satisfaction survey was undertaken by an independent body, IBP Strategy and Research, on behalf of the Council, the results of which were summarised in section 4 of the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing.

9.4. That, as the survey was undertaken immediately after the pandemic, the impact of that context had been reflected in the survey results.

9.5. That the results of the survey were notified to the Scottish Housing Regulator as part of the Annual Return against the Charter and accordingly were linked to the Annual Assurance Statement.

The Committee scrutinised:

9.6. The summary report of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance with regard to the performance of the Housing Service.

10. National Standards for Information and Advice Providers

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

10.1. That the advice and information functions within Housing Services were subject to an audit as part of its reaccreditation under the Scottish National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

10.2. That the process of reaccreditation, undertaken by the Scottish Legal Aid Board, consisted of two separate parts, namely:

- Peer review.
- Audit.

10.3. That the peer review, being a detailed review of case work, was undertaken remotely during April to June 2021, with the outcome then ratified by the Scottish Legal Aid Board and Scottish Government.

10.4. That recommendations made during the peer review process related specifically to individual cases rather than policy matters.

10.5. That a remote desktop audit was undertaken on a broad range of the Council's housing policies and business management processes, as well as an audit of operational aspects which was also undertaken by electronic means.

10.6. The Compliance Audit Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, which contained two recommendations.

The Committee scrutinised:

10.7. The Compliance Audit Report, attached as Appendix 1 to the report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, and obtained assurance that the Council's Housing Service had met the 40 separate standards required to achieve reaccreditation under the National Standards for Information and Advice Providers.

11. Housing Service – Annual Assurance Statement

After consideration of a report by the Corporate Director for Education, Leisure and Housing, copies of which had been circulated, and after hearing a report from the Head of Community Learning, Leisure and Housing, the Committee:

Noted:

11.1. The requirement to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 October.

The Committee resolved to **recommend to the Council:**

11.2. That the Annual Assurance Statement, together with supporting Annexes, attached as Appendix 4 to this Minute, be approved for submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Councillor Steven B Heddle rejoined the meeting during discussion of this item.

12. Conclusion of Meeting

At 11:53 the Chair declared the meeting concluded.

Signed: Gwenda M Shearer.