

PERFORMANCE AND REVIEW SCRUTINY FORUM

Minutes of meeting held via Confero and in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Almada Street, Hamilton on 3 October 2023

Chair:

Councillor Joe Fagan

Councillors Present:

Councillor John Anderson, Councillor Gerry Convery (Depute), Councillor Maureen Devlin, Councillor Richard Lockhart, Councillor John Ross

Councillors' Apologies:

Councillor Maureen Chalmers, Councillor Katy Loudon, Councillor Davie McLachlan, Councillor Kirsten Robb

Attending:

Chief Executive's Service

C Sneddon, Chief Executive

Education Resources

D Dickson, Education Operations Manager

Finance and Corporate Resources

P Manning, Executive Director; M Gordon, Administration Assistant; T Little, Head of Communications and Strategy; S McLeod, Administration Officer; L Marshall, Finance Adviser; N Reid, Improvement and Community Planning Manager

1 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

2 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum held on 8 August 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

The Forum decided: that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

3 Audit Scotland Report – Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023

A report dated 15 September 2023 by the Executive Director (Finance and Corporate Resources) was submitted providing a summary of the information contained within the Audit Scotland Report entitled 'Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2023' which had been published in May 2023.

Audit Scotland published an annual overview report on behalf of the Accounts Commission, covering key areas of current and future activity relative to local government and providing an opinion on how those were, or should be, managed.

The Overview 2023 report was the third and final in a series of reports which reflected on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2021 and 2022 reports considered the initial response phase of the pandemic and the second year of the pandemic respectively. The 2023 report built on the previous reports and examined the following:-

- ◆ how had the pandemic affected councils and their performance
- ◆ what were the current and future challenges facing local government
- ◆ how well placed were councils to deal with the current and future challenges

The Overview 2023 report, which could be accessed on the Audit Scotland website, had been structured around the following 3 main topics:-

- ◆ the impact of the pandemic on councils' performance
- ◆ what were the current challenges facing local government
- ◆ how were councils responding

A number of key messages were detailed in the Overview 2023 report and summarised in the report to the Forum. The Overview 2023 report also contained a number of recommendations and South Lanarkshire Council's position and proposed actions, where required, were summarised in the report to the Forum.

The Accounts Commission had prepared a checklist of questions for elected members' consideration to accompany the Overview 2023 report and the checklist, including narrative responses from a South Lanarkshire Council perspective, was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Forum decided: that the key messages and recommendations contained in the Audit Scotland Report entitled 'Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2023' be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of 29 November 2022 (Paragraph 5)]

4 Accounts Commission – Early Learning and Childcare – Progress on Delivery of the 1140 Hours Expansion

A report dated 26 September 2023 by the Executive Director (Education Resources) was submitted on the findings of the report published by the Accounts Commission on 1 June 2023 on the progress of delivery of the 1140 hours expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC).

The focus of the Accounts Commission's assessment was based on:-

- ◆ progress which the Scottish Government and councils had made in addressing the main risks to expanding funded ELC
- ◆ progress which the Scottish Government had made with planning how to assess the effectiveness of the expansion

The Accounts Commission had identified gaps in the data available on funded ELC and their potential impact as an area for action. It had published a recommendation for the Scottish Government and councils and a number of recommendations for the Scottish Government alone around:-

- ◆ review and collection of data
- ◆ development of long-term workforce plans for the sector
- ◆ urgent implementation of a process for monitoring progress with providers paying the living wage to staff delivering funded ELC
- ◆ capturing and considering children's views as part of future evaluation of the policy
- ◆ improvement of planning for and implementation of future policies by working with stakeholders to make plans to gather the necessary data for managing and planning services at an early stage

There were no immediate specific action points for the Council given its investment to expand both early and childcare infrastructure and workforce to meet, wherever possible, the needs of parents/carers and families across South Lanarkshire.

The Chair commended Education Resources on the outcomes of the Early Years' inspections published during 2022/2023.

The Forum decided: that the Accounts Commission report of 1 June 2023 on the progress made on the delivery of 1140 hours expansion of early learning and childcare be noted.

[Reference: Minutes of Education Resources Committee of 26 September 2023 (Paragraph 10)]

5 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.