



MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING of the CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Kilncraigs, Alloa, on Tuesday 7 March 2023 at 9.30 am.

PRESENT

Councillor Phil Fairlie, Convener (Chair)
Councillor Donald Balsillie
Councillor Martha Benny
Councillor Denis Coyne
Councillor Kenneth Earle
Councillor Ellen Forson
Councillor Wendy Hamilton
Councillor Scott Harrison
Councillor William Keogh
Councillor Fiona Law (Via Teams)
Councillor Darren Lee (Via Teams)
Councillor Graham Lindsay
Councillor Kathleen Martin
Councillor Mark McLuckie
Councillor Jane McTaggart
Councillor Bryan Quinn
Councillor Janine Rennie (Via Teams)
Rev Sang Y Cha, Religious Representation for Church of Scotland

IN ATTENDANCE

Nikki Bridle, Chief Executive
Stuart Crickmar, Strategic Director (Partnership and Performance)
Lorraine Sanda, Strategic Director (People)
Pete Leonard, Strategic Director (Place)
Colin Bruce, Chief Education Officer (People)
Michael Boyle, Improving Outcomes Business Manager (People)
Lindsay Sim, Chief Finance Officer (Partnership & Performance)
Chris Alliston, Senior Manager, HR and Workforce Development (Partnership & Performance)
Cherie Jarvie, Senior Manager, Partnership & Transformation (Partnership & Performance)
Lee Robertson, Senior Manager, Legal and Governance (Partnership & Performance) (Clerk to the Council)
Sophie Gardiner, Solicitor, Legal and Governance (Partnership & Performance)
Gillian White, Committee Services (Partnership & Performance)

CC(23)16 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Craig Holden.

CC(23)17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Mark McLuckie and Councillor Darren Lee both declared a non-financial interest in Item 4 Public Petition due to their relationship with Banchory Parent Council and Banchory Primary School. Both Councillors withdrew from the meeting and took no further part in proceedings.

CC(23)18 ORDER OF PROCEEDINGS

The order of proceedings, submitted by the Monitoring Officer, set out the format for the Special Meeting of Council to hear the petition.

Decision

The Council agreed the order of proceedings.

CC(23)19 PUBLIC PETITION

The report, submitted by the Monitoring Officer, summarised the petition which had been received following the 2023/24 budget engagement process.

The petition entitled “Hands off our nursery! Keep enrolment at Banchory ELC” was submitted in electronic form and had been verified with 461 signatures of people living in the Clackmannanshire Council area.

Attending:

Kathryn Beaton, Principal Petitioner, Banchory Parent Council
Emma Wilson, Chair of Banchory Parent Council

The Council heard a presentation from Kathryn Beaton and Emma Wilson. The presentation and the petition statement raised a number of concerns around the proposal for Banchory ELC not accepting any new admissions for the session 2023/24 and that instead, families would be offered child places in surrounding nurseries. They were concerned that this would be a potential route for Clackmannanshire Council to close the nursery permanently thereafter. The initial one-off saving would be lost to increasing costs in other areas of education and social care provision. They identified that 67% of the Banchory catchment children attend from SIMD Deciles 1 and 2, extreme markers for poverty, disadvantage and those targeted by attainment gap policy and also that approximately 50% of the Banchory community are currently under staged intervention. The recent Grade 5 Care Inspectorate reports praise Banchory ELC on its transition experience from ‘home to the setting and on to school’ in particular ‘Children being settled and secure’ by positively affecting children’s trust and confidence through personal development and strong relationships. There are concerns about transition if the children have to move on to school from a separate nursery. There were also concerns that some families would experience logistical difficulties with children at different establishments and this could lead to poor attendance. Clackmannanshire Council itself stated that “Banchory’s catchment area has been designated an area of educational priority which entitles additional resources which ensures good staff/pupil ratio” and “the addition of the ELC has been an asset to the school both in the preparation for primary education and in many aspects of early intervention.” Enrolment removal and future potential closure sought to undermine this and the petitioners sought to maintain current operations.

The Chief Executive withdrew from the meeting at 10.10 am. Stuart Crickmar, Strategic Director (Partnership and Performance), stood in to provide support to the Convener.

Members had the opportunity to put questions to the petitioners and to Council officers who were in attendance, namely Colin Bruce, Chief Education Officer and Michael Boyle, Improving Outcomes Business Manager. The questions concerned the evidence behind the statements made by the petitioners; the numbers of children involved; distances between ELC providers in Tullibody; and the financial savings .

The Chief Education Officer advised that the £500k savings set out in the budget proposal applied to a review of the entire ELC estate and that the saving for Banchory ELC was approximately £60k based on the re-alignment of two members of staff who would be utilised to provide support in other establishments. He also advised that the space created from the proposal would provide a significant benefit to the Primary School by creating flexible space for children with additional support needs who require intervention from other agencies including speech and language, and the Health and Social Care Partnership. Michael Boyle summarised that the Council is being asked to remove provision for three year olds at Banchory ELC. Provision for four year olds (pre-school) would still be in place and that would remain unless the Council made another decision in the future.

Councillor Janine Rennie withdrew from the meeting at 10.30 am and was not present during the decision making.

Motion

That the information contained within the petition requires consideration by Council within the context of deliberations associated with the upcoming General Revenue Fund budget for 2023/24.

Moved by Councillor Graham Lindsay. Seconded by Councillor Ellen Forson.

Decision

The Council unanimously agreed that the information contained within the petition requires consideration by Council within the context of deliberations associated with the upcoming General Revenue Fund budget for 2023/24.

Action

Chief Executive

The Convener advised that the Committee's decision would be notified in writing to the Principal Petitioner, Kathryn Beaton, within 7 working days.

Ends: 10.35 am

