

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Edinburgh Council's coat of arms. The coat of arms consists of a shield divided into four quarters. The top-left quarter shows a castle tower, the top-right a stag's head with antlers, the bottom-left a three-masted sailing ship, and the bottom-right a bird with its wings spread. Above the shield is a crown with four floral motifs. Below the shield is a ribbon with the motto 'A'NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 5

**Children's Services – Update on
Schools and Early Years
Establishments Reopening**

Falkirk Council

Title: Children's Services – Update on Schools and Early Years Establishments Reopening
Meeting: Emergency Executive
Date: 3 September 2020
Submitted by: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Emergency Executive with:
- (i) a summary of the overall position regarding the reopening of schools and early learning establishments; and
 - (ii) a summary of the ongoing health and safety monitoring arrangements that Children's Services have in place to ensure that schools can operate and remain open.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Emergency Executive:

- (i) notes the content of the report;**
- (ii) notes the work undertaken by officers from both Children's Services, Development Services and the Trade Unions in ensuring that the building pre-opening checks and individual establishment risk assessments were completed to allow establishment to reopen as planned; and**
- (iii) notes the additional funding received to date, to support the additional costs associated with the reopening of schools (Section 4.4)**

3. Background

- 3.1 Following the changes made by the Scottish Government to their Reopening Guidance, the Emergency Executive agreed on 6 August 2020 that primary and secondary school pupils would return on a phased /soft start basis between Wednesday 12 August and Friday 14 August 2020, with a full return on Monday 17 August 2020.
- 3.2 The Emergency Executive on 7 July 2020 had already agreed that early years establishments would:
- (i) have a full return of all 'returning children' on Wednesday 12 August 2020.
 - (ii) new start admission children would be admitted from Monday 24 August 2020.

- (iii) in addition a request was also made for further information on monitoring arrangements to ensure the safe operation of schools.

4. Considerations

4.1 Despite the extreme overnight weather all schools and ELC establishments with the exception of Beancross Primary School re-opened as planned to pupils on Wednesday 12 August 2020.

4.2 Beancross Primary School grounds were so badly flooded the school could not re-open on Wednesday 12 August 2020 as planned. The school re-opened on Thursday 13 August 2020.

4.3 Home to School Transport Arrangements Overall

Transport arrangements are in place and operating that ensure all children are able to be transported safely to school. There are however a number of limiting factors that exist where some of the current arrangements are on a temporary basis subject to permanent arrangements being sourced and put in place. That work is currently on-going and further details of this are outlined below.

4.4 Buses

As the Scottish Government extended the updated social distancing guidance that applies within schools to school transport it effectively negated the high risks previously highlighted with regard to the potential shortage of bus capacity. All bus contract operators are also ensuring that their vehicles meet the appropriate guidance.

4.5 Taxis

The Transport Planning Unit (TPU) did an outstanding job in being able to secure transport provision for those pupils who qualify for taxis. There are however a number of challenges that officers are currently trying to address to ensure these arrangements operate without any disruption:

- Shortage of Escorts (due to self-isolating absences etc)
- Shortage of taxi drivers (due to self-isolating absences etc)
- Shortage of taxi capacity (due to social distancing guidance – front seat can no longer be used)
- Temporary use of Social Work Day Centre Mini Buses to fill taxi capacity gaps.
- Extending the use of parental contracts.

4.6 Ongoing Monitoring Arrangements

- In line with the Scottish Government guidance all education establishments completed individual risk assessments prior to reopening to pupils on 12 August 2020.
- A summary of the aims and the critical areas covered by these risk assessments is attached as Appendix 1
- Proactive and Joint working with the Trade Unions enabled these risk assessments to be considered, reviewed and agreed.

- Children's Services have also agreed a joint process with the Trade Unions to enable risk assessments to be :
 - updated, if national guidance changes
 - regularly reviewed
 - reported regularly to both trade union partnership meetings : LNCT and Service Partnership Forum.

4.7 Updated School Recovery Plans/Contingency Planning

Children's Services officers are currently liaising with headteachers to ensure that their local School Recovery Plans are updated to reflect:

- Updated Scottish Government and Public Health Guidance.
- Communication protocols and processes to be followed in the event of COVID related whole or partial school closures.

Note: Schools will only be closed due to COVID related incidents on the instructions from Public Health.

- Contingency plans for maintaining education and curriculum delivery in the event of any COVID related disruptions.

Further details on this important work-stream will be provided in the next update report.

4.8 Pupil Attendance Rates

It is very pleasing to report that current average pupil attendance rates at the end of the first full week of the schools reopening is **c97%**.

4.9 Additional Scottish Government Funding

The Scottish Government have to date announced several tranches of additional funds to support the additional costs associated with the reopening of schools.

(i) Additional Teachers (£75.0m) 2020-21

Falkirk's overall share of this tranche of funding is **£2.344m**. Children's Services have used these monies to allow the temporary recruitment of an additional c50 fte teachers.

(ii) Additional School Support Staff (£5m) 2020-21

Falkirk's share of this funding tranche is **£0.156m** and has been used to provide additional temporary hours for support for learning assistants.

(iii) Other Additional School Reopening Costs (£20m) 2020-21

Falkirk's share of this funding has still to be confirmed but these monies can be used to fund:

- additional cleaning costs
- purchase of PPE supplies and equipment
- additional transport costs

The additional 1,620 weekly cleaning costs (agreed by Emergency Executive 6 August 2020) will be funded from these monies.

Note The Scottish Government have recently announced an extra £30m towards these additional costs, but access to this will only be allowed once confirmation that Falkirk's initial share of the £20m has been spent/committed.

5 Implications

Financial/Resources

- 5.1 Children's and Financial Services Officers are currently assessing the additional costs associated with reopening schools aligned to the additional funding provided by the Scottish government as outlined in Section 4.4.

An update on the overall COVID financial position is being prepared for the Council Meeting later this month.

Legal

- 5.2 All educational establishments reopened in line with the Scottish Governments latest guidance published on 30 July 2020.

Risk

- 5.3 As outlined in Section 4.3 risk assessments were undertaken by all premises managers and these were jointly reviewed and accepted by all the Trade Union representatives before Wednesday 12 August 2020.

Equalities/Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 5.4 No implications arise.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The reopening of our educational establishments successfully concluded a major workstream area that at times stretched resources from a number of Council Service areas to the maximum. This could not have been achieved without the collective, collegiate and partnership working from our school management teams and our Trade Union representatives.
- 6.2 The Service is now focused on ensuring that all our educational establishments can continue to operate in a COVID free environment where the health and safety of our pupils, staff and service users remain our highest priority. The ongoing review of our localised risk assessment will be a critical part of minimising risks.

Author: Gary Greenhorn, Head of Planning & Resources, gary.greenhorn@falkirk.gov.uk.
Tel No 01324 506681

Date: 12 August 2020

Appendix

Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment Overview

List of Background Papers

None

CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Education Establishments Reopening Information: Risk Assessments

Background – National Context

In line with the Scottish Governments guidance for the reopening of schools which was published on 30 July 2020, all schools when they return on Monday 10 August will carry out locally based risk assessments which are required and designed to:

- Ensure all children, young people and staff are protected from Covid-19 when in school
- Reflect the updated guidance and planning assumptions of a full return to schools

Aims of School Risk Assessments

- Support schools with the implementation of pragmatic and proportionate control measures and any mitigating actions that have been adopted to reduce risk.

Areas Covered By Risk Assessments

All Falkirk schools will be required undertake risk assessments on 38 separately identifiable risks which extend over 8 key risk areas:

1. Reopening of school building and site
2. Access to grounds and school building
3. Risks to pupils
4. Risks to staff
5. Cleaning and waste disposal
6. Suspected cases of Covid-19
7. Communications
8. Additional site specific issues

Development of Risk Assessments

It is expected that schools will develop and prepare their local risk assessments in consultation with trade unions and Parent Councils (if established) and should also be shared with staff.

Risk assessments should also be reviewed and updated (if required) should the Scottish Government update the national guidance.

Communication with Parents, Pupils and Staff

The risk assessments should help and support schools with communication to their key stakeholders including Parent Councils (if established) regarding health and safety matters.

Standards and Quality

All schools individual risk assessments will be reviewed by Children's Services to ensure a consistent, appropriate and proportionate approach has been adopted across all schools.