

## **S21. Local Government Benchmarking Framework LGBF Performance Information Children Services**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided context in regard to Children's Services' Local Government Benchmarking information.

The committee had considered a report, on 17 August 2017 (ref SC6), on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). Following discussion on the information in regard to Children's Services, in particular in regard to the cost per pupil in pre-school, primary school and secondary school, the committee had called for a detailed report on the reliability of the LGBF data, which had been collated by the Improvement Service (IS), and had requested information which the service considered provided an accurate picture of how the Service was performing. The committee had indicated that this was a potential area for inclusion in the Scrutiny Plan. In particular the committee sought assurance on the cost per pupil provided and commentary on this compared to other Local Authorities.

The report set out the methodology by which costs are calculated by the IS and the key reasons for inconsistency nationally in the way which costs are calculated. The key reasons for inconsistency are:-

There are a number of reasons why costing information may vary between local authorities:-

- Income from Early Years "wrap around care" places and provision is not included. (Key in Falkirk's figures);
- Treatment of Enhanced/ASN provision costs in mainstream schools;
- Treatment of peripatetic or visiting teachers; and
- Different levels of Service may be provided, this is particularly relevant for Early Years where non-statutory childcare services are in place.

Additionally, costs were overstated as a consequence of the Service restructure which saw the Catering and Cleaning function move into Children's Services.

The adjusted costs, taking the factors above into account, were:-

	CHN1 <u>Primary</u>	CHN2 <u>Secondary</u>	CHN3 <u>Early Years</u>
Cost Per Pupil (Submitted)	£ 4,785	£ 6,865	£ 4,951
Cost Per Pupil (Adjusted)	<u>£ 4,368</u>	<u>£ 6,588</u>	<u>£ 4,834</u>
Scottish Average	<u>£ 4,744</u>	<u>£ 6,729</u>	<u>£ 3,857</u>

The adjusted cost per primary pupil of £4,368 showed that primary schools operate very efficiently and placed Falkirk Council in the top quartile nationally, not 17<sup>th</sup> as the LGBF suggested.

Similarly for cost per secondary pupil, the adjusted cost of £6,558 placed Falkirk Council in the second quartile, not 21<sup>st</sup> out of 32 as stated in the LGBF.

In regard to cost per pre-school pupil, the cost of £4,834 placed Falkirk Council 21<sup>st</sup> not 29<sup>th</sup>. However this is due, in the main, to the fact that the “cost” does not include income and Falkirk Council provides non-statutory extended day care, whereas a number of Local Authorities do not, which inflates Falkirk’s “cost”

The Head of Planning and Resources gave a detailed summary of the report. The committee thanked the Head of Planning and Resources for a thorough and informative explanation. Members stated that the report and the summary provided clarified the position in regard to the Service LGBF performance and as a consequence this would no longer be an area for further scrutiny in regard to the Scrutiny Plan. However, members asked several questions in regard to the information provided.

In response to a question on the cost of pre-school per pupil and in particular whether the provision was profitable, the Head of Planning and Resources explained that the true cost was approximately £10 per hour for baby care based on 70% uptake compared against the charge of £4.80 per hour. The charge was broadly comparable with those of other Local Authorities. However it was a matter for Council to determine whether the charge should be increased.

The Head of Planning and Resources stated, in response to a question on the impact of Pupil Equity Funding, that the LGBF was based on cost not income.

The committee sought clarification on the process for determining primary class configuration. In Falkirk, configuration models are determined at the centre with teachers allocated to schools on the basis of number of classes. The Head of Planning and Resources confirmed that this would continue in 2018/19 and led to efficient class configuration. He confirmed there is consultation with head teachers in regard to the class configuration. It was for the head teacher to manage staff and workload. He confirmed that nationally there was shortage of teachers and of supply teachers.

Following questions, the Head of Planning and Resources explained the rationale for catering and cleaning division’s move to Children’s Services, stating that the majority of the services provided were for Children’s Services establishments.

## **Decision**

**The committee noted the report.**