

INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION - POLAR ACADEMY

A report by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) (copies of which had been circulated) was presented on the Polar Academy programme which Bathgate Academy pupils were currently participating in.

Ten pupils from Bathgate Academy had been selected to take part in an expedition to Greenland in April 2019. The Polar Academy was a charitable organisation which aimed to help young people boost their self-esteem and confidence. Pupils from S1 to S3 were selected from a different secondary school each year and undertook extensive and challenging training for ten months prior to the expedition.

The expedition was funded through a combination of sponsorships and donations for which parents, the school and the organisers had worked hard to fundraise. The report outlined their achievements to date and the support the school and the Council had provided, including free access to West Lothian Leisure facilities to assist with their training, and £5000 of Pupil Equity Funding which had been contributed by the school.

The Committee was recommended to consider the participation of ten pupils from Bathgate Academy in the 2019 Polar Academy expedition to Greenland, the support already agreed by the Council and whether any further support was required.

The Chair moved a motion in the following terms:

“West Lothian Council Education Executive commends Bathgate Academy for its participation in the Polar Academy and for providing West Lothian young people with a unique and life changing opportunity.

Education Executive further commends the parents group and organising committee for their fundraising efforts in order to secure the successful delivery of this opportunity for the young people, and notes the estimated current fundraising shortfall of approximately £25,000.

Education Executive notes that the parents and organising committee will continue to seek funds to ensure that the project is successfully delivered for all participants, and the financial position reflected in the Committee paper of a forecast year end overspend in the wider Education portfolio within the context of a forecast underspend in the core Education budget of approximately £289,000.

Therefore, to ensure that all West Lothian participants are successfully able to take part in Polar Academy, the Education Executive agrees to underwrite from the education service budget any remaining fundraising shortfall in funds required specifically for the participation of West Lothian young people in Polar Academy by making available one off funding of up to a maximum of £20,000 to support any funding shortfall for West Lothian young people still in place on Friday 15 February 2019.

The financial consequences of this motion have been verified by the Head

of Finance.”

Decision

To unanimously approve the terms of the motion.