

MINUTE of MEETING of WEST LOTHIAN LEISURE ADVISORY COMMITTEE of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on 1 FEBRUARY 2018.

Present – Councillors Dave King (Chair), Alison Adamson, Tom Conn, Charles Kennedy, Andrew McGuire and Kirsteen Sullivan (substituting for Cathy Muldoon)

Apologies – Councillor Cathy Muldoon

In attendance

Robin Strang, Chief Executive, West Lothian Leisure
James Cameron, Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources), WLC
Donald Forrest, Head of Finance and Property Services, WLC
Paul Stark, Active Schools and Community Sport Manager, WLC
Heather Duncan, Accountant, WLC/WLL
Laura Tyrrell, Cultural and Instrumental Music Manager, WLC
Mike Harvey, Outdoor Education Instructor, Low Port Outdoor Centre
John Lewis, Manager, Low Port Outdoor Centre

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The committee confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 21 December 2017 as being a correct record. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

3. SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE - INNOVATION FUND

The Active Schools and Community Sport Manager advised the committee that in the absence of an operational report being submitted to the meeting, which was due to the timetabling of meetings, a report and presentation was provided on the Outdoor Learning Hubs project delivered by the Low Port Centre and Education Service through the Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund. He then introduced Mike Harvey, Outdoor Education Instructor/Outdoor Learning Hub Lead, and John Lewis, Low Port Centre Manager, to the meeting.

A presentation was then given by Mr Harvey and Mr Lewis and a short film provided on the work carried out as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge. The project was funded by Education Scotland as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge, to raise attainment of children and young people living in deprived areas, in order to close the equity gap and drive forward improvements in educational outcomes.

The committee was advised that outdoor learning has been identified as integral to achievement in learning. The aim of the project was to improve

attainment in numeracy and literacy through outdoor learning within two primary school clusters in West Lothian. The two clusters were Inveralmond and Deans in Livingston. In total, 120 P5 children were involved in the project over academic year 2016/17. The programme ran for two hours per week over a twelve week period.

The project was delivered in conjunction with the class teacher. The strategy for the outdoor challenges was that they would be locally based using the John Muir Award and Brilliant Residentials. The impact on the health and wellbeing of the children taking part was measured. A health and wellbeing questionnaire study on the children's attitudes to learning showed a 20% increase over the year. The performance team concluded that there was a significant increase in the 'value added' data for Mental Arithmetic and General Maths displayed by the study group against both the control group and the whole of the West Lothian P5 cohort. The children gained on average six months of mental arithmetic and two months of general maths against a similar cohort of children within the control schools.

The presentation concluded by highlighting that the intervention had a very positive impact, particularly on numeracy, in a very short timescale with health and wellbeing showing a marked increase over the year. Members were advised that since the findings had been reported staff had been contacted by a number of interested authorities in Scotland for further information.

The committee thanked Mr Harvey and Mr Lewis for attending the meeting and acknowledged the excellent impact outdoor education activities have had on children within a short period of time.

In response to a question from the committee relating to next steps, Mr Harvey advised that it was proposed to roll out the outdoor learning hubs to schools across the authority, working jointly with teaching staff.

Following conclusion of the presentation the committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) providing an update on the Outdoor Learning Hubs project delivered by the Low Port Centre and Education Service through the Scottish Attainment Challenge Innovation Fund.

The report stated that the project was one of the most rigorously assessed and successful innovation projects within West Lothian. It would be incorrect to attribute the significant gains recorded solely to the project due to the complex and interlinked variables that could influence attainment however, given the undeniably positive nature of these results, a longer term project utilising the Outdoor Learning Hub model may be worth pursuing.

The Active Schools and Sport Manager then responded to questions from members of the committee. In response to a comment relating to the health and wellbeing questionnaire being too cumbersome he advised that monitoring the impact of outdoor learning on raising attainment was part of the criteria of funding to evidence the achievements of the project.

The questionnaire could be reviewed going forward and tailored to meet the needs of each school.

It was recommended that the committee notes the content of the report.

Decision

- To acknowledge the excellent work delivered by the Low Port Centre and Education Service through the Scottish Attainment Challenge Innovation Fund; and
- To note the presentation and contents of the report.

4. PRIVATE SESSION

The committee resolved that under Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of item 5 (West Lothian Leisure Financial Position) below on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

5. WEST LOTHIAN LEISURE FINANCIAL POSITION

The committee considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services, providing an update in relation to the financial position for West Lothian Leisure (WLL) to 31 December 2017 and provided a forecast for the 2017/18 financial year. West Lothian Leisure 2017/18 Projected Trading Statement was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report set out the financial performance of the WLL budget for the period to 31 December 2017 and reported a 2017/18 year-end financial forecast which takes account of relevant issues as identified by WLL.

The Head of Finance and Property Services advised that a timetable has been agreed with WLL to ensure current and relevant financial information was provided in the reports to WLLAC. All financial information would be regularly monitored and analysed by WLL and West Lothian Council Review Group before being reported to WLLAC with a focus on potential implications for the council.

Work was in progress by WLL on their five year revenue budget strategy for the period 2018/19 to 2022/23 which was a key priority and absolutely critical to ensure financial sustainability for WLL.

The Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) provided members with a verbal update following the special Board meeting of West Lothian Leisure which was held on the evening of 31 January 2018 to discuss the five year budget strategy. Further discussions were required between WLL and WLC and updates would be provided to future meetings of WLLAC.

The Chair recommended that a special meeting of West Lothian Leisure Advisory Committee be arranged when further details were available from West Lothian Leisure on their five year revenue budget strategy.

It was recommended that the committee notes the contents of the report.

Decision

1. To note the contents of the report and the update from the Head of Finance and Property Services and the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources); and
2. To agree that a special meeting of West Lothian Leisure Advisory Committee be arranged when further details were available from West Lothian Leisure on their five year revenue budget strategy.