

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE on 27 OCTOBER 2014.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Dodds, Stuart Borrowman and John McGinty; Appointed Representatives Elsie Aitken, Eric Lumsden, Myra MacPherson and Lynne McEwen.

Apologies – Councillor Jim Walker, Appointed Representative John Hendrie and Senior People's Forum Representative Maureen Finlay

Absent – Councillor Andrew Miller

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

2. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the Minute of the meeting held on 9 September 2014 as being a correct record. The Chair thereafter signed the Minute.

3. SCHOOL ESTATE ACCOMMODATION FEASIBILITY STUDIES UPDATE

The Panel considered a joint report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Estates and the Head of Schools with Education Support providing details of the feasibilities undertaken to consider potential hall extensions at Peel, Carmondean and Broxburn Primary Schools to facilitate the delivery of higher volumes of free school meals and the requirements for two hours effective physical education. Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the new hall proposals at Peel Primary School; appendix 2 provided details of the new hall proposals at Carmondean Primary School and appendix 3 provided details of the hall extension proposals at Broxburn Primary School.

The report recalled that following the announcement by the Scottish Government on 7 January 2014 that all Scottish Primary 1 to Primary 3 pupils would be entitled to receive a free school meal from January 2015 the Education PDSP, at its meeting held on 24 February 2014, noted that a report would be presented to a future meeting of the Panel on the performance of the school estate which would contain further details of the feasibility studies undertaken at Peel, Carmondean and Broxburn Primary Schools. These feasibilities were to consider the suitability of the existing accommodation to deliver the increased demand for free school meals, the provision of physical education (PE) and the potential for improved community utilisation. As the feasibilities primarily related to the need to deliver the Scottish Governments free school meal statutory requirements, officers agreed that a separate report outlining the

outcomes of the feasibilities be presented in advance of the annual school estate performance report. The report went on to outline the feasibilities undertaken for each school and provided the estimated cost of the proposals. The provision of new halls and extension as outlined in the feasibilities would facilitate the delivery of increased free school meal requirements whilst also improving physical education provision.

The Head of Schools with Education Support then advised the Panel that the capital cost implications of the requirement to increase the provision of free school meals through extensions at Peel, Carmondean and Broxburn Primary Schools were outlined in the report to Council Executive dated 10 June 2014. Initial estimates highlighted an approximate cost of between £3m and £3.6m. However, following more detailed investigations and value engineering of proposals the total cost of the improvements to deliver additional free school meals for Peel, Carmondean and Broxburn Primary Schools was approximately £2.8m, which was reported to the Scottish Government for determination.

The Head of Schools with Education Support went on to advise that there was no funding allocated for these projects within the general services capital programme. Officers have been liaising with the Scottish Government on the potential for funding to be provided by them. A formal decision would be announced following determination by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) distribution group. The Panel was advised that once a decision had been notified to the council it was proposed that a further report would be submitted to the Council Executive.

The Panel was asked to note the outcome of the feasibilities and the costs associated for Peel, Carmondean and Broxburn Primary Schools.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

4. HOME EDUCATED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the outcome of a review of the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy. The Scottish Government Guidance on Home Education was attached at appendix 1; the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy at appendix 2; practice in other local authorities at appendix 3 and comments of parents at appendix 4 to the report.

The report explained that the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy was previously updated in October 2013. This update was undertaken following an investigation by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) following a complaint from the parent of a home educated child. The findings of the investigation by the SPSO were that information provided to the parent by West Lothian Council had been inconsistent and unclear. As a result of this West Lothian Council was

asked to develop written guidelines regarding access to Community Schools in relation to home education. The Education Executive, at its meeting held on 1st October 2013, approved the amendments to the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy and recommended that a review of the policy be carried out during 2014.

The report went on to outline the four areas which the review focussed on as follows:

1. Compatibility with Scottish Government Guidance;
2. Practice in other Local Authority Areas;
3. Outcomes for West Lothian home educated children and young people; and
4. Minor revisions to further increase clarity.

The Customer and Performance Manager then advised the Panel that the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy updated in October 2014 was compatible with Scottish Government guidance and offered a greater level of flexibility to the parents of home educated children and young people.

During the question and answer session the Panel recommended that a typographical correction be made to recommendation 2(ii) of the report and that the role of the Additional Support Needs Manager in the process flow diagram on pages 13 and 23 of the policy (appendix 2) be clarified.

The Panel was asked to note the outcome of the review of the Home Educated Children and Young People Policy and agree that the report be referred to the Education Executive for consideration subject to the amendments highlighted above.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Agreed that the report be referred to the Education Executive subject to the amendments highlighted above being carried out.

5. SCHOOL EXCURSION POLICY

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Schools with Education Support providing details of the additions to the School Excursion Policy which clarified the national context within which it should be interpreted and applied. The School Excursion Policy dated October 2014 was attached as an appendix to the report.

The report explained that the School Excursion Policy was designed to ensure that risks arising from trips and excursions were minimised so that the safety and wellbeing of pupils was protected. West Lothian Council's

local policy was implemented within the framework of the national Scottish Government Guidance which stated that:

- The focus should be on how the real risks arising from school trips and outdoor learning activities were managed rather than a focus on paperwork; and
- There is a need for a proportionate and sensible approach for planning and organising off-site activities.

An audit of the application of the School Excursion Policy was carried out within West Lothian which found significant non-compliance. The Education Services Senior Management Team subsequently instructed that all schools must comply with the policy. In order to avoid any confusion about the paperwork necessary for audit purposes, a new section was inserted into the policy specifying the minimum requirements. The report went on to provide details of the documentation required.

The School Excursion Policy would ensure that schools take a sufficiently robust approach to planning and organising trips and excursions, while at the same time adopting a low bureaucracy, enabling approach to outdoor experience and off-site visits.

During the question and answer session members recommended that generic risk assessments be prepared to help schools in the risk assessment process. Members also recommended that the section on insurance be further clarified to provide more detail on when additional insurance was required. In addition, a recommendation was made to amend the sample code of conduct to clarify its application to pupils and parents.

The Panel was asked to consider the additions to the School Excursion Policy and recommend that the report be submitted to the Education Executive for approval.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report;
- Agreed that the report be submitted to the Education Executive for approval subject to the amendments being made as recommended by the Panel.

6. STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2013/14

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) and Head of Schools with Education Support providing details of the performance of Education Services as set out in the Standards and Quality Report 2013/14.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) advised that the Standards and Quality Report 2013/14 set out the performance of the service, along

with the principal activities, key achievement and areas for improvement of the service.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) and Head of Schools with Education Support then responded to questions raised by members of the Panel and noted a typographical error on page 11 of the report.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

7. THE USE OF THE INSIGHT TOOLKIT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND WEST Lothian's PERFORMANCE IN S4 NATIONAL QUALIFICATION IN 2014

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the introduction of Insight, the new national tool for the assessment and analysis of National Qualifications.

The report explained that Insight has replaced STACs (Standard Tables and Charts) as the tool by which local authorities and schools would analyse attainment in the National Qualifications, taken by pupils in the Senior Phase (years S4 to S6). It was noted that STACs would continue to be available as a source of historical data. Insight went live on 5th September 2014. The aim of Insight was to support the key principles and purposes of Curriculum for Excellence by helping local authorities and schools to focus on understanding and reducing the gap between higher and lower attainers and on raising attainment for all. The report went on to outline the key features of Insight and its use within Quality Assurance Processes.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) advised the Panel that West Lothian schools were prepared for the use of Insight through the provision of training to key staff within each secondary school. Details were also provided on West Lothian's Performance in S4 National Qualifications 2014 using data from Insight.

In conclusion, the introduction of the new National Qualifications and the related analysis tool, Insight, provided both opportunities and challenges for schools and authorities. The National Qualifications would enable and encourage schools to provide curricula which would better meet the needs of the young people and prepare them for their roles in the 21st century. Insight would continue to develop in order to capture attainment arising from a wider range of qualifications and learning programmes.

During the question and answer session the Parent Council Representative asked if training could be provided to Parent Councils on the use of the Insight tool.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report and the

implications for the use of and reporting on attainment data.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report; and
- Noted the request for training to be provided to Parent Councils.

8. WORKPLAN 2014-15

The Panel considered the contents of the workplan (copies of which had been circulated) and the update provided by the Head of Schools with Education Support.

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan and update provided.