

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE on 24 NOVEMBER 2015.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Dodds, Stuart Borrowman, Carl John (substituting for Andrew Miller), John McGinty and Jim Walker; Appointed Representatives Elsie Aitken, Myra Macpherson, Lynne McEwen and Parent Council Representative Lynn Taylor.

Apologies – Councillor Andrew Miller; Appointed Representative John MacKinnon and Parent Council Representative Eric Lumsden.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled under Standing Order 7 (urgent business) that the Education PDSP workplan be tabled for consideration as the final item on the agenda to provide members with information relating to the frequency of reports being submitted for 2015/2016.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the minute of the meeting held on 6 October 2015 subject to noting that appointed representatives E. Aitken, J MacKinnon, M. Macpherson and L. McEwen were not recorded as being present at the meeting. The Chair then signed the minute subject to the changes highlighted.

4. PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Heads of Education providing details of the performance of Education Services. Details of the high level and public performance reporting indicators for the service were attached as an appendix to the report to enable members the opportunity to scrutinise performance.

The report explained that the council's improvement strategy required that each Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel received regular programmed updates on service performance.

The Education PDSP considered regular reports on attainment at both the primary and secondary stages and also on school leaver destinations.

The Education (Quality Assurance) Committee considered reported on HMI inspections and on validated self-evaluations of individual schools

and services.

Performance indicators were scrutinised by the Performance Committee following each West Lothian Assessment Model Review.

During the course of the discussion the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) recommended that performance reporting on education services be submitted to the Education PDSP annually for consideration.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Agreed that performance reporting on education services be submitted annually for consideration.

5. ACCESS TO EDUCATION GRANT FUNDING - PHASE 2

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the successful bids made by West Lothian schools for grant funding from the Access to Education Fund provided by Education Scotland.

The report recalled that the Access to Education fund was launched in 2014 and was aimed to reduce the barriers to learning experienced by pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Schools were given the opportunity to apply for funding which would enhance learning, address existing barriers and help each child reach their full potential. The total funding available across all 32 local authorities was outlined in appendix 1 to the report, highlighting that West Lothian Council secured the third largest amount of all authorities.

The Headteacher from Burnhouse School, advised the Panel that 12 bids were submitted, 8 of which were successful. Five individual school bids and 3 cluster/group bids which involved a further 18 schools successfully received individual grants ranging from £5,000 to £35,000 (details of which were outlined in appendix 2 to the report).

West Lothian was commended by Education Scotland for the high quality, innovative bids which were submitted. Work was underway to transfer the funds to individual schools and clusters/groups to allow the projects to begin. Schools were required to report on progress and it was hoped that in addition to a national good practice event, West Lothian schools who benefitted from funding could share the outcomes of their projects with all schools within West Lothian in order to build capacity and share good practice. Ongoing support would be available for all schools involved both at a local and national level.

Members of the Panel congratulated all officers involved for the excellent work carried out to achieve the successful bids.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

6. TRANSFORMATIONAL DIGITAL LEARNING.

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the £250,000 grant from the Scottish Futures Trust's 'Inspiring Learning Spaces' Fund. The report also outlined the plans for Transformational Digital Learning which included the development of an Innovation Hub in West Calder High School.

The 'Inspiring Learning Spaces' Fund brought together a number of education services from across Scotland to explore the most effective learning environments for young people. The project aimed to investigate and develop approaches to learning and teaching beyond the traditional classroom space and consider how effective teaching and digital technology could maximise learning opportunities for individuals and groups of learners. The project investigated the use of digital learning tools to enable collaboration in virtual learning spaces by both learners and teachers and allow collaboration with partners to provide young people with more flexible access to a full range of academic and vocational qualifications.

West Lothian Council submitted a successful bid for funding to develop Transformational Digital Learning. During the 2015-16 academic year a physical space would be redesigned in the existing West Calder High School to allow the creation of an Innovation Hub where high impact teaching methodologies could be investigated and modelled. Staff and pupils would have opportunities to explore learning within an open, flexible space using digital tools and flexible furniture. Staff and pupils would benefit from the increased opportunity to use new technology to improve teaching and learning across the curriculum using the 'Inspiring Learning Spaces' initiative. Senior Phase students in other West Lothian schools would also have access to innovative digital learning through the creation of a virtual campus without the need to travel to another school. Pupils would be able to access a range of academic courses in their own schools, at home or in any place where connection to the internet was possible. Staff in West Lothian secondary schools would engage with cutting edge teaching methodologies and work collaboratively for the benefit of all students.

During the course of the discussion the Panel acknowledged the excellent work carried out by staff to progress the use of new technology which would offer innovative ways to develop the curriculum and support effective delivery of courses to Senior Phase pupils.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

7. CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL FOR A DIGITAL LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of a response from education to the Scottish Government's consultation on the proposal for a Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland.

The report advised that digital technology has the potential to support education in Scotland's schools in a wide variety of ways. Embedding digital technology in learning and teaching across the curriculum would be key to ensuring that children and young people were equipped with the essential digital skills they required to flourish in the 21st century.

West Lothian Education broadly welcomed the themes and priorities for action outlined within the consultation document. The formal response from West Lothian was attached as an appendix to the report.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and agreed that the report be forwarded to the Education Executive for approval.

8. NAMING OF NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL IN ARMADALE

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) providing details of the outcome of the consultation on the naming of the new primary school in Armadale. A list of the suggested school names agreed by the Education Executive was attached as an appendix to the report, which formed the basis of the consultation.

The Head of Education (Development) advised that the new school in Armadale required to be named. Extensive consultation was carried out and the most frequent name suggested by all three school communities and by members of the public was South Dale Primary School. In addition a petition was submitted by Armadale and District War Memorial Association which received the largest number of votes supporting the proposal that the new school be named William Angus VC Primary School in recognition of the deeds of William Angus, VC, who was born in the area that the school was built on.

During the course of the discussion Councillor Borrowman stated that the developer of the area adopted the name Southdale (all one word) and suggested that this be consistent when consideration was being given by the Education Executive to name the new school.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report;

2. Noted the recommendation that the name South Dale be amended to Southdale to be consistent with the developers in the area; and
3. Agreed that the report be submitted to the Education Executive for consideration and approval.

9. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the proposal to review the council's Parental Involvement Strategy.

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires all Education Authorities to produce a "Strategy for Parental Involvement". The existing Parental Involvement Strategy was approved by the Education Executive on 7 April 2009. It was proposed to review the Strategy in light of progress made in promoting parental involvement and to refocus it on those areas still requiring most development. The most important area for further development was supporting parents to become involved in the learning of their individual children. The Raising Attainment Strategy recognised parental involvement as one of the key building blocks of improved attainment and it was intended to ensure that the revised Parental Involvement Strategy contributed to this. The Strategy would also take into account the needs of Looked after Children and consider how to promote equal opportunities.

A team led by the Quality Improvement Manager and involved the Service Manager, Policy and Performance, representatives from the primary, secondary, special and pre-school sectors, representatives from the West Lothian Parent Council Forum, the teaching professional associations and other council services including Social Policy and Adult Basic Education would be established to take forward this review.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report and recommend to the Education Executive that the council's Parental Involvement Strategy be reviewed with a view to being adopted in Session 2016/17.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and agreed that the report be forwarded to the Education Executive for approval.

10. RAISING ATTAINMENT STRATEGY 2015-18

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the revised Raising Attainment Strategy.

The implementation of the Strategy coincided with a period of significant improvement in attainment in West Lothian. The Strategy was reviewed to reflect the learning derived from its original implementation, the

reorganisation and refocussing of centrally based teams, as well as evolving national and local priorities and emerging and best practice within West Lothian and other local authorities. Whilst evidence demonstrated continuous improvement in raising attainment, the council's focus would also be on closing the attainment gap for those children and young people from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

The Panel noted that the council's Raising Attainment Strategy has driven significant improvements in attainment.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report and agreed that the report be forwarded to the Education Executive for approval.

11. WEST Lothian COUNCIL EDUCATION SERVICES:
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN
(SCOTLAND) ACT 2014 (PART 4) PROVISION OF NAMED PERSON

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of the progress and areas for development required to ensure the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (part 4), covering the provision of Named Persons, by 1 August 2016.

The report explained that the Children and Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014 required a Named Person to be responsible for each young person aged between 3-18 in Scotland from 1 August 2016. The role of the Named Person was to ensure that there was one point of contact that children/young people and families could go to for advice or support if they required it. The Named Person would be available to listen, advise and help a child or young person and their family, providing direct support or helping them to access other services. The intention was that the Named Person was in a position to help families address their concerns early and prevent concerns becoming more serious. West Lothian Council's Education Services aimed to provide a consistent approach to how the authority implemented the Named Person service, thereby consistently supporting children and young people's wellbeing.

Education Services collated evidence of current practice and identified the required areas for development to ensure the successful implementation of an universal and workable Named Person Service within West Lothian by August 2016, details of which were outlined within the report.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

12. 2015 BASE SCHOOL FORECASTS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development providing details of the

2015 base school forecast that would be used for future revenue and capital planning, pupil placement decisions and responses to developers on planning proposals which would have an impact on education capacity, details of which were summarised in the appendices to the report.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development advised that the report set out the latest school roll forecasts. The updated forecasts of pupil rolls were key elements for future education provision planning and consultation on development planning. Two typographical errors were highlighted within the report as follows:

- Page 6, Section D4, second line – “These show a short term dip from 10,837 pupils in 2015/16 – should read 10,835 pupils”; and
- Appendix 2(a) & 3(a) – the capacity of Bankton Primary School was recorded as being 463 but should be 462.

Medium term primary and secondary school forecasts were critical elements in the forward planning of revenue and capital investment in West Lothian. They were also an important element in the council’s consideration of planning applications for residential development which would have an impact on school capacities.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development advised that the 2015 Base Forecast was presented in a revised format as outlined in Section D2 of the report. Overall the forecast showed that there would be an on-going need to invest in the school estate to ensure that sufficient places would be available in catchment schools to meet anticipated demand. Demand would be influenced by the rate of increases in housebuilding and the number of planning applications for new housebuilding coming forward, which would be kept under on-going review. The forecasts highlighted a particular demand for school places with some schools likely to avoid the effect of school roll decline while others showed significant increase/decrease. Ongoing school consultation and review of education provision arrangements was essential to support the development plan.

In conclusion, the updated school roll projections indicated growth in the pre-school and primary sectors over the forecast period. There was a need to continue to monitor the broader economic context in updating school rolls and projecting school capacity requirements. It was also important to review forecasts in light of any material changes, such as demographics, but particularly so with house building completions as this was the greatest single factor influencing school roll forecasts. Further school consultation and capacity enhancement was necessary to ensure sufficient pre-school and school places were available.

During the course of the discussion the Head of Planning and Economic Development was asked about the degree of accuracy of the base school forecasts for previous years. Members of the Panel were then provided with an update on the projections for 2011/2012 compared to the actual 2015 figures.

The Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel was asked to note

and consider the following recommendations which were intended to be submitted to the Education Executive for approval:

1. Notes that the forecasts have been updated and incorporated the 2015 School census as the base;
2. Notes that, unlike previous forecast reports, the forecasts now included scenarios based on projected house completions;
3. Agrees the updated forecasts of pupil rolls, including the assumptions and methodology applied in producing these data;
4. Agrees the school roll forecasts as being the basis for future education provision planning and consultation on development planning; and
5. Notes that further investment in the school estate would be necessary in the future but the time of that investment would be influenced by house building rates and the commitment of developers to fund additional school capacity.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report; and
- Agreed that the report be forwarded to the next appropriate meeting of the Education Executive subject to the typographical amendments being made as outlined above.

13. WORKPLAN

The Panel considered the contents of the workplan (copies of which were tabled).

Decision

Noted the contents of the workplan.