



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

REPORT ON THE DELIVERY OF SERVICE DURING THE ENFORCED SCHOOL CLOSURES 29 NOVEMBER – 3 DECEMBER 2010

REPORT BY DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to inform Committee about the work undertaken by Schools to ensure the continuation of learning during the schools closures due to extreme weather.

B. RECOMMENDATION

The Executive should note the contents of this Report and that a report will be prepared for PDSP on how we can improve continuity of education during severe weather incidents or building failure.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focusing on our customers' needs• Providing equality of opportunities• Making the best use of our resources
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	N/A	
III Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	N/A	
IV Consultation	N/A	

D. TERMS OF REPORT

The heavy snow and exceptionally cold weather which hit West Lothian at the end of November 2010 created the worst conditions our County had experienced for almost 50 years. The disruption to road and rail travel also impacted on our schools, and on grounds of health and safety, the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning and Area Services) took a decision at 6.45 am on Monday 29 November to close all West

Lothian Schools and Council Nurseries. The severity of the weather conditions caused the Chief Executive to call together the Severe Weather Emergency Management Team (SWEMT) on the Monday morning, and the team continued to meet twice daily for the rest of that week. Each afternoon a decision was taken on schools based on the available weather information and schools access. Schools remained closed for the whole week.

The massive disruption to learning had to be addressed as quickly as possible and immediately on Monday morning, 29 November, Education Officers began contact with Head Teachers to agree strategies. Many Head Teachers had already contacted teaching staff to plan the preparation of on-line learning materials using both the School website and Glow, the on-line learning resource managed by Learning and Teaching Scotland.

Throughout the week 29 November – 3 December many West Lothian teachers provided work for their pupils via these on-line services and parents and carers were directed to these sites through Group Call, the Council's Facebook page and our own website. We are awaiting estimates from schools on how many children accessed these materials, but early indications are that it was significant.

The Appendices 1-4 illustrate the variety of work prepared by teachers and undertaken by children during the closure week. The use of on-line learning, and in particular, Glow, has been extremely encouraging and preparations are well underway in every West Lothian school to ensure continuity of learning in the event of further closures due to severe weather or any other incident which forces a school to close. These preparations include the provision of packs of material for those children who are unable to access a computer at home. Libraries and Community Centres are familiar with Glow and will be able to support learning for those young people who find it easier to work there.

There is no doubt that West Lothian is an area of national best practice in on-line learning. However there is no substitute long-term for effective teaching and schools are also preparing a programme of twilight classes beginning in January and a larger Easter revision programme, to support children studying for national examinations. Early in 2011 the Head of Education will meet with Head Teachers and with Parent Council Chairs to agree a formal provision for Learning during times of emergency and this will be reported to the Education PDSP in due course.

E. CONCLUSION

The Council does not readily move to universal school closures, but where there are issues of child and adult safety in and around the school, closure is often the only wise decision. In this case it is important to ensure continuity of learning wherever possible. The experience of the November/December closures has taught the value of forward planning and on-line provision. This will now be a focus for Head Teachers. Glow access and pupil passwords are a priority for Education IT Support, and raising awareness with parents about the provision of on-line learning materials is also a priority.

Head Teachers responded extremely professionally to the emergency and they and their staff are to be congratulated for their work. Pupils too are to be congratulated for their commitment to independent learning which will prepare them well for the future. The Executive is asked to note the contents of this Report.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments: 4

1. Broxburn Academy Report
2. St Margaret's Academy Cluster Schools and Armadale Academy Cluster Schools Reports
3. Whitburn Academy Report
4. Whitburn Academy Cluster Schools Reports

Contact Person: Gordon Ford, Depute Chief Executive

gordon.ford@westlothian.gov.uk

Gordon Ford, Depute Chief Executive, West Lothian Civic Centre, Howden South Road, Livingston EH54 6FF

Date: 12 January 2011