

3. 2012 BASE SCHOOL FORECASTS

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development advising of the 2012 base school forecast that would be used for future revenue and capital plans, pupil placement decisions, education planning and consultation and development plan consultations. The report also included an updated methodology summary.

The Head of Planning and Economic Development explained that medium term primary and secondary school forecasts were critical elements in the forward planning of revenue and capital investment in West Lothian. The current base forecast covered a time range from school session 2012-13 with forecast school rolls from 2014-15 through to 2023-24. The housing component of the forecast was based on Audit 13.

The 2012 Base had been updated with the 2013 school census and would also be updated when the session 2014 pupil placement applications for P1 and S1 were determined in late March 2014. There was also a requirement for ongoing monitoring to determine if revised methodological development were required and that any such changes were fit for purpose.

The Head of Planning and Economic continued to advise that it was important to note that whilst the trend in primary school rolls was generally downward in the last decade, this was currently reversing, short term at least, irrespective of economic conditions, as potential pupils had already been born and were living in West Lothian. Tracking pupil cohorts from birth to P1 entry indicated sustained growth in the short term and P1 intakes of a higher level than in previous years. And although the figures contained in the appendices attached to the report showed a reduction in the 2016 and 2017 P1 cohorts these cohorts were expected to increase before actual enrolment at P1 as exhibited by the current 2015 P1 intake cohort.

It was also likely that primary school rolls would increase and remain above the 2013 roll total of 14,888 for the next four years for demographic reasons irrespective of new housing development.

Information on the 2012 base school roll forecast was summarised in the report and whilst both secondary school roll forecasts showed some decline in the last two years of the forecast time period, the anticipated growth in the 2016 and 2017 cohorts could completely remove these current forecast reductions. It was also noted that the Base Auditable Forecast, as demonstrated in a series of appendices attached to the report, showed an increase in total primary rolls from 14,685 pupils in school session 2012-13 to 16,108 pupils in school session 2023-24.

In conclusion the forecasts showed a particular demand for school places with some schools likely to avoid the effect of school roll decline whilst others showed a significant increase/decrease. The council had recently completed a series of school consultations that had dealt with

primary/secondary school associations and also primary school catchment boundary changes. Therefore ongoing school consultation and a review of education provision arrangements were essential to support the development plan at this time.

It was recommended that the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel consider the content of the report and present the following recommendations to the Education Executive :-

- i. Agree the forecast update on pupil rolls, including the assumptions and methodology applied in producing this data; and
- ii. Agree the school roll forecasts as being the basis for future education provision planning and consultation on development planning.

Decision

1. To approve the terms of the report;
2. Noted that an "Exception Report" would be brought to a future meeting of the Panel and that in the meantime would be added to the Work Plan; and
3. Agreed to forward the report to the next appropriate meeting of the Education Executive with the recommendation that it be approved.