

6. GOVERNANCE REVIEW - EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY IN EDUCATION

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) advising that the Scottish Government had launched a consultation on its governance review of Scottish education, entitled 'Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to achieve Excellence and Equity in Education' with responses required by 6 January 2017.

The Consultation Paper set out a series of questions, details of which were included in the appendix to the report and within the presentation carried out inviting members of the Education Executive to comment. Members comments would be included within a report which would be submitted to the next meeting of Council Executive for consideration, which was due to the fact that the consultation related to a range of other services which supported children and young people, families and communities such as child protection, social services and housing.

The Scottish Government identified key principles which supported the approach of the review. It focussed on how governance could be improved to support delivery of excellence and equity to children and young people. The governance review sought views on how education in Scotland was run, including who should take decisions in relation to the education of children and young people and how funding could be made fairer. It also asked about the support teachers and practitioners needed to do their jobs well and how this could be improved.

The Education Executive was then asked to comment on the set of questions included in the Consultation Paper. The following comments were received and would be included in the report submitted to the next meeting of the Council Executive:

Q1: Elsie Aitken agreed that good quality improvement systems were in place to improve attainment and positive destinations in schools in West Lothian and that head teachers had autonomy to develop the curriculum to meet the school's needs. Head teachers would agree that they had to deal with a lot of governance issues and would not want additional administration and governance arrangements to be handed down to schools.

Q10: Councillor Miller stated that in his opinion services were best delivered at a local level through hubs of schools where appropriate, and that a return to delivering services at a regional level would not be acceptable.

Q15: Elsie Aitken stated that there were not enough teachers being trained which was a big issue in schools, regardless of where decisions were made.

The following general comments were then received from members of the Education Executive:

- Councillor Miller stated that he felt there was already a good system of devolved schools management in place in West Lothian and was supportive of the responses to the consultation by officers;
- Councillor Toner stated that West Lothian's education system was working well and the issues relating to raising attainment in other local authorities were no longer an issue in West Lothian. He believed that it was unnecessary for officers of West Lothian Council to be involved in responding to the consultation;
- Eric Lumsden stated that parents were happy with the way that West Lothian education services were run. Parents had no demand for change. The present system of devolved schools management was good. If regional bodies were to be introduced then parental involvement would be required.
- Councillor Borrowman highlighted that Regional Councils were previously abolished and welcomed the fact that there was no support for a regional structure. However, he was not sure if the balance was right in West Lothian and he believed that there was scope for greater devolution to be given to clusters of head teachers but within the present structure. He believed that now was not the time to make changes when things were going well locally.
- Councillor Fitzpatrick stated that if the funding formula was changed he believed that this would have a negative impact on local authorities. He saw a risk in moving to the English model which was fragmented, led to a loss of economies of scale and reductions in budgets available for teaching due to spending on consultants and advisers by individual schools.

The report recommended that the Education Executive should consider the presentation and comment on the Scottish Government governance review 'Empowering Teachers, Parents and Communities to achieve Excellence and Equity in Education'.

Decision

- Noted the contents of the report and presentation;
- Noted the comments from members of the Education Executive in response to the consultation questions; and
- Noted that the comments from members would be included in a report which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Council Executive for consideration.