

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION EXECUTIVE of WEST Lothian COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST Lothian Civic Centre, on 20 JUNE 2017.

Present – Councillors David Dodds (Chair), Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Stuart Borrowman, Harry Cartmill, Pauline Clark, Tom Conn, Peter Heggie, Chris Horne, Charles Kennedy, Dave King, Sarah King, John McGinty, Andrew McGuire, Andrew Miller, Cathy Muldoon, George Paul, Moira Shemilt and Kirsteen Sullivan; Appointed Representatives Elsie Aitken, Heather Hughes and Margaret Russell; Parent Council Representative Eric Lumsden.

Apologies – Appointed Representatives Myra Macpherson and Margaret Russell.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Dodds declared a general declaration of interest due to him being a member of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS).

2. ORDER OF BUSINESS, INCLUDING NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair ruled under Standing Order 7 “Urgent Business” that the Education Governance – Next Steps report be tabled and considered as the final item of business on the agenda.

3. MINUTE

The Education Executive approved the minute of the meeting held on 28 March 2017 as being a correct record. The minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

4. SCHOOL SESSION DATES 2018/19

A report was circulated by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) providing details of the proposed Session Dates for 2018/19. Appendix 1 attached to the report outlined the proposed session dates for 2018/19 and appendix 2 provided details in calendar format.

The Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) advised that the proposed session dates for 2018/19 took account of the comments received during consultation with the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT), Head Teachers and Parent Councils. Comments from parents were also highlighted in the report.

Appendix 3 to the report outlined the proposed session dates in neighbouring authorities. It was noted that some authorities had not yet published their school session dates for 2018/19 therefore the information contained in appendix 3 was subject to change.

It was recommended that the Education Executive approve the Session Dates for 2018/19.

Decision

Approved the terms of the report.

5. PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING IN WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL

A report was circulated by the Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) providing details of the Pupil Equity Funding and its contribution to closing the poverty related attainment gap in West Lothian Schools.

The report explained that Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) was additional funding allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap. The Scottish Government has committed to this funding as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge programme from 2017-18. The Pupil Equity Funding forms part of the £750m Attainment Scotland Fund which would be invested over the current Parliamentary term. The total amount allocated to West Lothian schools was £5,052,000.

The Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) advised that schools had completed their plans for PEF funding which were due to be submitted by the end of June 2017, in line with their School Improvement Planning cycle. A central team was put in place consisting of a lead officer for each of Literacy, Numeracy, Health & Wellbeing (HWB), Early Years, Data & Performance and a Business Manager. This team was led by a Senior Development Officer and line managed by the Head of Service (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance). Their key role was to work with schools and clusters on planning interventions as well as creating a sustainable professional learning programme.

The impact of PEF in schools would also be a focus for the internal quality assurance process of Validated Self Evaluation. In addition, any school undertaking inspection would discuss its PEF plans as part of the Quality Indicator Raising Attainment and Achievement.

A presentation was then given by the Senior Development Officer providing an overview relating to the key principles of Pupil Equity Funding. Head Teachers were the decision makers with funding being used as additionality to services already existing in schools. The team would continue to work with partners as it moved forward and provide targeted support for children and young people affected by poverty to achieve their full potential within and beyond the classroom.

Finally, whilst still in planning stages, West Lothian schools were well placed to work collaboratively and collectively to interrupt the cycle of inter-generational poverty in order to improve the life chances of children and young people in communities in West Lothian.

The Head of Education (Curriculum, Quality Improvement and Performance) then responded to questions from elected members. In response to a question relating to measuring the impact of PEF in the short and long term, she advised that tracking and monitoring systems were in place to ensure information was available on what was being done to reduce the poverty related attainment gap. The Education Executive was also advised that an update report on the progress of Pupil Equity Funding plans would be submitted to the Education Executive for consideration at its meeting scheduled to be held on 10 October 2017.

The Primary/Early Years teaching staff representative advised that many of the schools in West Lothian were commending the central team for the way they were supporting schools in this initiative.

It was recommended that the Education Executive note the progress of Pupil Equity Funding plans, and its contribution to closing the poverty related attainment gap.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report and the presentation provided; and
2. Noted that a progress report would be submitted to the Education Executive on 10 October 2017 for consideration.

6. EDUCATION GOVERNANCE - NEXT STEPS

The Education Executive considered a tabled report by the Depute Chief Executive providing details of the publication of the 'Education Governance – Next Steps' paper by the Scottish Government issued on 15 June 2017.

The Depute Chief Executive highlighted a typographical error on page 1, section B: Recommendation, as the final sentence at bullet point 2 should be moved to the end of bullet point 4 which should read – 'Funding regional improvement collaboratives through devolving Education Scotland resources and pooling of funding from Local Authorities'.

The Depute Chief Executive advised that the paper 'Education Governance: Next Steps – Empowering our Teachers, Parents and Communities to Deliver Excellence and Equity for our Children' set out the Scottish Government's proposals to reform Scottish education with the aim of driving improvement and delivering excellence and equity for all. The Scottish Government recognised the strengths of Scottish education in terms of attainment at higher and advanced higher levels and positive destinations and also noted declining performance relative to other countries, declining literacy and numeracy and the gap between children from more deprived and less deprived backgrounds.

The Scottish Government aimed to deliver an education system centred around children and young people through more effective and consistent

pupil participation and would take steps to modernise and strengthen the legislation on parental involvement to ensure that the wider parent forum could be involved in a variety of ways. The primary focus of the reform was to create a 'school and teacher led system', based on the premise that the people best placed to make decisions about learning were those professionals qualified to do so. Decisions about improving learning and teaching would rest at school level. The Scottish Government aimed to support teachers to achieve their full potential and to enhance the professionalism of support staff.

The report went on to outline the responsibilities of Head Teachers and the regional improvement collaboratives. The Scottish Government anticipated that up to seven regional improvement collaboratives would work with local professionals, local government and national bodies in determining boundaries and arrangements.

Local authorities would have an important role in enabling and supporting schools through the services they provided. There would be a new duty on local authorities to collaborate to support improvement on a regional basis. They would also be responsible for improvement through their provision of education support services, their regional collaboration and in securing leadership in their schools. They would oversee quality in the provision of early learning and childcare, as well as being a key provider of services. Local authorities would retain important local accountability for the supply and quality of leadership in schools in our communities. The vast majority of the funding for school education would continue to be channelled through local authorities and they would continue to have a role in ensuring that public resources allocated for the delivery of education in Scotland were properly accounted for.

In conclusion, the Scottish Government stated that some of the changes outlined in the report could be achieved without legislation and that it would start to work with its partners to deliver these quickly. This would include the establishment of regional improvement collaboratives. National agencies would be realigned to support the regional improvement collaboratives and strengthen inspection. The further empowering of schools and improving learning and curricular support would also proceed quickly. A new Education Governance Bill would deliver those changes that required legislation which would be introduced in the second year of the current parliament. The Scottish Government recognises, however, that improvements would not be achieved as a result of changes to structures but rather through changes in culture and practice.

It was recommended that the Education Executive:

1. Notes the publication of the 'Education Governance – Next Steps' paper by the Scottish Government, and in particular the proposals to:-
 - Establish approximately seven Regional Improvement Collaboratives;

- Create the post of Regional Directors, to be appointed by Scottish Government to lead each of the seven regional improvement collaboratives;
 - Create regional improvement teams drawing on Education Scotland staff, local authority staff and others;
 - Fund regional improvement collaboratives through devolving Education Scotland resources and pooling of funding from local authorities;
 - Require education authorities to appoint a Chief Education Officer as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 in order to fulfil their responsibilities in relation to education support services; and
2. To receive further reports as the implementation of the proposals progresses.

Motion – moved by Councillor Dodds

Education Executive notes the proposals contained in the Government's paper "Educational Governance: Next Steps".

The Executive believes that the proposals do not take sufficient account of the key role of local authorities in the delivery of education and in quality improvement in our schools.

The Executive notes with concern the decision that the Directors of the Regional Collaboratives will be directly answerable to the Scottish Government and regards this as a clear erosion of local democratic control of education.

The Executive also notes the achievements of West Lothian Council in relation to education including:

- year on year improvements in examination performance by pupils in S5 and S6 including the schools with the highest SIMD ratings.
- increasing numbers of young people moving in to positive destinations on leaving school.

The Executive believes that these improvements are due to the support provided to schools by senior council officers based on close scrutiny of the performance of individual schools, and that removing that responsibility from local authorities will not increase attainment or close the attainment gap.

The council's programme of quality improvement through the programme of validated self-evaluation is an example of best practice, based on the close working relationships between council officers and school staff. Its oversight by the Education Quality Assurance Panel provides close

democratic scrutiny of the performance of schools in West Lothian.

The Executive does not believe that moving this responsibility from local authorities to regional collaboratives will lead to better quality improvement in our schools. Therefore, the Executive instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Depute First Minister to seek a commitment that local authorities will continue to play a central role in the delivery and quality improvement in local schools.

Amendment - moved by Councillor Millar

To agree with the motion moved by Councillor Dodds subject to replacing the second paragraph as follows:

‘Whilst the Executive recognises that details of these proposals are not yet known, the Executive seeks reassurance that the key role of local authorities in the delivery of education and quality assurance is recognised’.

Decision

To unanimously agree the joint position as undernoted:

Education Executive notes the proposals contained in the Government’s paper “Educational Governance: Next Steps”.

Whilst the Executive recognises that details of these proposals are not yet known, the Executive seeks reassurance that the key role of local authorities in the delivery of education and quality assurance is recognised.

The Executive notes with concern the decision that the Directors of the Regional Collaboratives will be directly answerable to the Scottish Government and regards this as a clear erosion of local democratic control of education.

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