

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION EXECUTIVE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, LIVINGSTON, on TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2009.

Present – Leader of the Council Peter Johnston (Chair), Andrew Miller (Vice-Chair), Frank Anderson, Willie Boyle, John Cochrane, Martyn Day, Robert De Bold, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Ellen Glass, Isabel Hutton, Carl John (substituting for Jim Walker) and John McGinty; Mrs Elsie Aitken.

Apologies – Councillor Jim Walker; Mr Robert Birrell and Mrs Myra MacPherson.

1. MINUTE

The Education Executive confirmed the Minute of its Meeting held on 23rd June 2009. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

2. REVIEW OF NURSERY ADMISSION CRITERIA

Admission criteria for pre-school and ante pre-school provision had been an issue raised by a range of stakeholders in recent years. In January 2008, the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel had considered a report which outlined a number of issues and officers response to the issues. In April 2008, the key issues arising from the report were considered by the Education Executive and in August 2008, the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel had endorsed a review of pre-school admission arrangements through a suitably experienced consultant.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been tabled following amendments made to the report that had been circulated with the agenda) advising that the review of nursery admission criteria had been undertaken by a former West Lothian Pre-School Head Teacher and providing a copy of the consultant's report as an appendix to the report.

The report provided members with an outline of the pre-school context, information on customer feedback and complaints and responses to the issues that were raised during the consultation on the following matters:-

- Transparency required in the planning of pre-school provision and how capacities were determined.
- Clarity and objectivity of admission criteria required, along with transparency in the allocation of pre-school placement and the operation and transparency in waiting lists.
- Take up of wraparound care not being used to prioritise pre-school placements and allegations that the allocation of wraparound care had been inconsistent.

- Lack of pre-school catchment arrangements in contrast with the existence of such arrangements in other local authority areas.
- Communication and information provision, including loss of records, out-of-date records, inconsistent information being provided to parents, non-return of telephone calls and clearer information in simple language.
- Requests for an appeals procedure for nursery admissions.
- The need for continuity of education provision for 3-18 year olds.

Having considered the outcome of the consultation and the consultant's report, the Head of Education (Development) recommended that the Education Executive agree:-

- (a) To formalise a Pre-School Planning Group, including representatives of Headteachers, Teaching Unions, finance and human resources to oversee the assessment of demand and staff deployment within available resources and arrangements for the sensitive management of any required provision changes who would clarify on an ongoing basis the required capacity at establishments.
- (b) To extend the remit of the Early Years Monitoring Group to monitor the operation of the proposed School Placement Panel and the Pre-School Planning Group and provide comment for an annual report to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel along with data on the number and nature of complaints on pre-school placements, and refer to the Performance Committee as appropriate.
- (c) To replace the Early Years Admission Panel with the School Placement Panel.
- (d) To replace the current pre-school guidance set out in appendix III with revised guidance reflecting the principles within the report as set out in appendix IV.
- (e) To plan core staffing for pre-school provision based on January intakes and forward plan staff deployment through the Pre-School Planning Group.
- (f) To review the number of places required through pre-school partnership arrangements and consider where appropriate direct council delivery where this would meet parent demand and an efficient use of resources through contract review arrangements.
- (g) To review with Finance Services the requirement for a link between pre-school placement and the wraparound care services.

- (h) To consider the implications on an annual allocation of all pre-school places in May of each year and give greater emphasis to distance and residence within broad geographic “catchment areas” in the planning of provision and allocation of pre-school and ante pre-school places taking account of January and Easter intakes. The full system would be rolled out over the next two pre-school admission years and would be fully in place for the August 2010, January 2011 and Easter 2011 intakes.
- (i) To review the effectiveness of all communication and user information through the Early Years Monitoring Group including consideration of issues raised through pre-school admission complaints.
- (j) To clarify for all applicants that all pre-school admission complaints including decisions of the School Admission Panel should be addressed to the Customer Services Manager, who was not a member of the School Placement Panel and confirm that complaints would be dealt with in line with Education and Cultural Services policies.

Elected members expressed concerns at the tabling of a replacement paper and of the short notice they had been given to read the replacement version and identify amendments and requested that the matter be referred back to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for further discussion prior to be presented in its final format to the Education Executive for approval.

Decision

To agree to refer the report to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel for further discussion prior to the report being presented to the Education Executive for final approval.

3. 2009 SCHOOL BASE FORECASTS

Medium term primary and secondary school forecasts were critical elements in the forward planning of revenue and capital investment in West Lothian and covered a time range from the current school session 2008-09, with forecast rolls from 2009-10 through to 2019-2020.

As the council’s development plan had been approved, it was critical to get an understanding of the school roll forecast that would drive future education provision planning and the allied investment strategy.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) advising of the updated 2008 school forecasts that would be used as the base for future revenue and capital plans, pupil placement decisions, school provision planning and

consultation, and development plan consultations.

The report provided full information on the medium term school roll forecast methodology, a general summary having been provided as an appendix to the report; caveats relating to the current school roll forecasts including 0-18 year old population trends, housing allocations post 2019, and an analysis of vacant properties and properties for sale in West Lothian; and concluded with information on the 2008 base school roll forecasts which were fully detailed in the appendices to the report. The school roll forecast was demand led based largely on historic trends, weighted and controlled as necessary.

The updated school roll projections indicated growth in the pre-school and primary sectors over the forecast period with a period of limited declined in secondary schools followed by a subsequent growth after 7 years. There was a need to continue to monitor vacant properties for sale and the broader economic context to update school rolls and project school capacity requirements. It would also be important to review forecasts in light of any material changes in housing building completions since that was the greatest single factor influencing school roll forecasts.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the Education Executive:-

- a. Agree the forecast update on pupil roll numbers and the assumptions and methodology applied in producing the data;
- b. Agree the school roll forecasts as being the basis for future education provision planning and consultation on development planning; and
- c. Note that an updated report on school forecasts would be brought to the Education Executive annually.

In response to a suggestion, the Head of Education (Development) agreed to bring forward school roll updates more frequently than annually should forecasts change dramatically.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

4. SQA RESULTS 08-09 – PRE-APPEAL

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) advising of the performance of West Lothian pupils in the SQA examinations diet 2009.

Although the national pre-appeal data had not yet been published, national figures for the published indicators were relatively stable and comparisons with the national figures for 2008 had therefore been

provided in the report. All comparison data had been based on the 2008 pre-appeal figures to facilitate comparisons. The figures did not take account of higher examinations taken at West Lothian College through consortium arrangements.

Members noted from the report full information on (a) performance in S4 which was as good or better than in diet 08 and compared favourably with national averages; (b) performance in S5 bases on the S4 school roll where attainment remained broadly similar to the 2008 attainment; and (c) performance in S5 based on the January S5 pupil roll where staying on levels and achieved levels had been maintained at 2008 levels. The report highlighted an increase in the number of presentations at Advance Higher level in West Lothian, as well as an increase in the pass rate at Advanced Higher level.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) recommended that the Education Executive:-

- Note the content of the report and progress made
- Congratulate pupils, parents and teachers on the continuing improvements

In response to a suggestion, the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) undertook to incorporate information on the number of pupils who had applied for university places in the post-appeal results report when it was presented to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel at a later point in the year.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report subject to including carers in the second recommendation.

5. APPOINTMENT OF SAFEGUARDERS

The council had a statutory duty to maintain a panel of safeguarders. A safeguarder from the panel was appointed by a Children's Hearing, or by a Sheriff to provide an independent report on the best interests of any child involved in the Children's Hearing system.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Support Services (which had been circulated) advising that a recruitment exercise to appoint additional safeguarders to the West Lothian Panel of Safeguarders had been undertaken in April 2009.

Arising from the recruitment exercise, Fiona Jones and Susan Martin had been selected as potentially suitable candidates. Consultation had been undertaken with the Sheriff Principal, the Chair of the Children's Panel, the Authority Reporter and the Head of Social Policy. No adverse

comments had been received and the two candidates had been appointed to the West Lothian Panel of Safeguarders until May 2012.

The Head of Support Services recommended that the Education Executive note the appointment of Susan Martin and Fiona Jones to the West Lothian Panel of Safeguarders.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.