

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL held within MS TEAMS VIRTUAL MEETING ROOM, on 24 AUGUST 2021.

Present – Councillors David Dodds (Chair), Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Stuart Borrowman, Peter Heggie, Tom Kerr, John McGinty, Andrew Miller and Appointed Members Heather Hughes, Elsie Aitken and Margaret Russell

Apologies - Jackie Galbraith (Chief Executive of West Lothian College) and Appointed Members Derek Cornwall, Myra MacPherson and Lynne McEwen

In attendance - Leona Mullarky (Joint Forum of Community Councils)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTES

The panel confirmed the minutes of its meeting held on Tuesday 4 May 2021 as a correct record.

3. EDUCATION RECOVERY UPDATE

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive informing of the updated Scottish Government Guidance on reducing the risk in schools from coronavirus (COVID-19), and the implications for mitigations in place in West Lothian Schools.

It was recommended that the panel note:

1. the updated Scottish Government Guidance on reducing the risk in schools from coronavirus (COVID-19), and the implications for mitigations in place in West Lothian Schools; and
2. the expectation that revised guidance would be issued at the end of September.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

4. S5 AND S6 SCQF EXAMINATION RESULTS 2021

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Interim Head of Education (Secondary) providing an update on the performance of students in attaining Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Awards at Level 6 (Higher or equivalent) in the S5

and S6 stages, and at Level 7 (Advanced Higher or equivalent including HNC) in the S6 stage.

It was recommended that the panel note:

1. Performance of S5 students in 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 had risen in the five year period;
2. Performance of S6 students in 5+, 3+ and 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 6 had risen in the five year period; and
3. Performance of S6 students in 1+ Awards at SCQF Level 7 had risen in the five year period.

The panel queried if the number of appeals received was available. It was confirmed that the number received was relatively low although the deadline for receipt meant that the final figures were not yet known. The Interim Head of Education (Secondary) undertook to report the figures at a future meeting of the panel.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. To request that the number of appeals received is reported to a future meeting of the panel.

5. ANNUAL PLAN AND REPORT - NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK AND REDUCING INEQUALITIES OF OUTCOME

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Heads of Education informing of the West Lothian Annual Report for 2020/21, and the Annual Plan for the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and Reducing Inequalities of Outcome 2021/22.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the progress made in West Lothian in session 2020/2021; and
2. Note the key activities planned for session 2021/2022 to further improve outcomes for children, young people and families.

The panel were informed that a third recommendation should also have been included on the report:

3. To note the annual plan and report would progress to the next meeting of the Education Executive for approval.

Decision

1. To note the recommendations should detail that the plan and report would progress to the next meeting of the Education Executive for approval; and

2. To agree that the report and its recommendations be forwarded to the next meeting of the Education Executive for approval.

6. ABOLITION OF FEES FOR INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC AND CORE CURRICULUM COSTS

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services) informing of the abolition of fees for instrumental music, and the removal of core curriculum charges for school session 2021/22.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the one year agreement for the abolition of fees for instrumental music, and the removal of core curriculum charges for school session 2021/22;
2. Note that COSLA and the Scottish Government would work together to develop sustainable models of funding and provision with the aim of allowing the long term removal of fees and charges; and
3. Note that a further report on the detailed model for the delivery of IMT during school session 2021/22 to pupils currently participating would be submitted to the next meeting of the panel.

It was noted that the report advised an exercise was underway to gather information on actual planned charges to inform the distribution of funding. Officers confirmed these figures had now been collated and undertook to circulate this information to panel members.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report; and
2. To request that officers circulate individual school charges to those elected members on the panel.

7. 2020/21 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE - MONTH 12 MONITORING REPORT

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Finance and Property Services providing an update on the financial performance of the Education portfolio.

It was recommended that the panel:

1. Note the financial performance of the Education portfolio in 2020/21;

2. Note that the Education portfolio position at month 12 was part of the overall council budget position reported to Council Executive on 22 June 2021; and
3. Note actions to be taken by Heads of Service and budget holders to manage spend within available resources.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

8. REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL: POLICY AND OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

The panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources) informing of the revision to the Attendance at School: Policy and Operational Procedures (2017) in line with the introduction of the Inclusion and Support Service.

It was recommended that the panel consider the revised Attendance at School Policy and Operational Procedures (attached as Appendix 1) which was intended for submission to Education Executive for approval.

Decision

To agree that the report and its recommendations be forwarded to the next appropriate meeting of the Education Executive for approval.

9. WORKPLAN

A copy of the workplan had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the content of the workplan.