

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within OGILVIE HOUSE, OGILVIE WAY, KNIGHTSRIDGE, LIVINGSTON, EH54 8HL, on 16 MARCH 2010.

Present – Councillors Andrew Miller (Chair), Jim Walker, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Ellen Glass, Greg McCarra

Apologies – Councillor Danny Logue

1 ORDER OF BUSINESS, INCLUDING NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

The panel agreed to discuss as a matter of urgent business the Response to the Proposal for a Scottish Autism Strategy Bill, which had been referred to Education PDSP for comment by the Health & Care PDSP before being referred to Council Executive for approval.

2 ATTAINMENT IN WEST LoTHIAN SCHOOLS – PRESENTATION

There was a presentation by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance), which updated the panel on attainment in West Lothian Schools.

The presentation covered SQA performance in line with comparators and, also highlighted above & below comparators for each of the eleven secondary schools in West Lothian.

The presentation also covered Higher Maths Performance and a percentage distribution of S5 Highers, which highlighted English Maths, Biology, History, Chemistry Physics and others.

Following discussions the panel requested additional information on cohort trends, S5 Highers within the grouping (others) and an analysis of figures.

Decision

1. To note the presentation
2. To confirm West Calder High School figures.
3. To bring a report on S5 Highers within the grouping (others) to a future meeting of the panel.
4. To provide ten-year figures showing cohort trends to panel members.
5. To provide a report on the analysis of figures to a future meeting of the panel.

3 MINUTE

The panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 16 2 March 2010 as a correct record and was thereafter signed by the Chair

4 RESPONSE TO PROPOSAL FOR A SCOTTISH AUTISM STRATEGY BILL

A report by Head of Social Policy was circulated which advised the panel of the proposed response to the Proposal for a Scottish Autism Bill.

The report advised that the Health & Care PDSP had already considered the report and had expressed its view that Education PDSP should also have the opportunity to scrutinise the report.

The report recommended that the panel consider the terms of the draft response before it is considered at Council Executive.

The report advised that the proposal for a national strategy was laudable in its intent to achieve consistency of services for people with autism. It was the view that West Lothian was already providing good quality services to people with autism but was aware that continuous development and improvement needed to be sustained.

The report also expressed concern of the proposed introduction of legislation which was specific to a particular group of service users with disability, given that this would give statutory priority to this group at the expense of others, who were equally in need.

During discussions it was suggested that the paper be shared with COSLA for more information to be gathered as to the standard of the provision in comparison to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The panel also requested information on the support network for pupils with autism going on to university.

Decision

1. To support the response to the consultation
2. To share the paper with COSLA to gather information as to the standard of the provision I comparison to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.
3. To report back to the panel on the support network for pupils with autism going on to university.

5 CENTRAL EDUCATION SERVICE MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report by the Head of Education Development and Head of Education Quality Assurance had been circulated which presented a copy of the Central Education Services Management Plan 2010-2011.

The report advised that the Management Plan would be utilised by the management team and stakeholders to assess and gauge performance and improvement. The measures, targets and initiatives of each plan were available for management, monitoring and reporting on the corporate performance management systems (Covalent and Initiatives).

Decision

To note the contents of the report and the Central Education Service Management Plan.

6 SCHOOL LINK OFFICER; EXTENSION OF PILOT PROJECT

There was a report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services (which had been circulated), which informed members of the extension of the pilot project to base a Police Officer in each of two West Lothian Secondary Schools during sessions 2009/10 and 2010/11, with the addition of a further officer to be located in Whitburn Academy.

As part of a previously agreed pilot, police officers located at Bathgate Academy and Deans Community High School were working in partnership with school staff and pupils to identify support and work with pupils at risk of victimisation, offending and social exclusion, and to assist staff, pupils and parents with information on community safety and substance abuse.

The pilot would be the subject of a formal review. Early indications were that it was proving successful at meeting the identified needs which included: -

- Providing an educational input into the curriculum.
- Reducing incidents of anti-social behaviour and victimisation.
- Providing a safe and secure school community.
- Engaging with young people.
- Ensuring that young people remain in education
- Improving relationships between the police, schools and young people.

The pilot was designed to support the application of council policy, and the achievement of positive educational outcomes in numerous areas including citizenship, health and well being, social inclusion, community safety and positive behaviour.

Decision

To note the contents of the report.

7 SEEMIS MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM – OULINE BUSINESS CARE FOR LIMITED LIABILITY PARTNERSHIP

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated), which advised the panel of the need to amend the legal structure of the SEEMIS Group in order to meet the business needs of West Lothian Council and other members councils, and to determine the basis of West Lothian Council's relationship with the new organisation.

The report recommended that the panel: -

- Support the recommendation of the SEEMIS Direct Management Group (DMG) to reconstitute the legal status of SEEMIS Group to a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP).
- Support the officer proposal that West Lothian Council participate in the new organisation as a partner and that it is legally documented by way of a members' agreement and services agreement).
- Agree to progress this strategy and the proposals to the Education Executive for agreement.

The report advised that the current SEEMIS structure was not sustainable as it exposed member councils to varying degrees of risk, which required to be mitigated. Following extensive review and research through the DMG of SEEMIS an outline business case was developed for the transfer of the Joint Agency Agreement to a Limited Liability Partnership.

Following consultation with SEEMIS legal advisors Dundas & Wilson and West Lothian Council Legal Services it was agreed that a Limited Liability Partnership was the most appropriate legal structure.

Active participation in the new SEEMIS Limited Liability Partnership on a partnership basis would enable West Lothian Council to contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation.

Following discussions Councillor Fitzpatrick requested the cost of engaging Dundas & Wilson to undertake an options appraisal of the most appropriate structure of the SEEMIS Group.

Decision

1. To support the recommendation of the SEEMIS Management Group to reconstitute the legal status of SEEMIS Group to a Limited Liability Partnership.
2. To support the proposal that West Lothian Council participate in the new organisation as a partner and that it was legally documented.
3. To recommend that the report be referred to Education Executive for approval.
4. To report back to panel members with the cost of engaging Dundas and Wilson.