

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION EXECUTIVE of WEST Lothian COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST Lothian CIVIC CENTRE, on 4 OCTOBER 2011.

Present – Councillors Peter Johnston (Chair), Andrew Miller, Frank Anderson, William Boyle, John Cochrane, Martyn Day, Lawrence Fitzpatrick, Ellen Glass, Isabel Hutton, Danny Logue, Jim Walker

Apologies – Councillor Robert De Bold, Myra MacPherson

In Attendance – Elsie Aitken, John Hendrie and Rev. W. Richard Houston.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair ruled that the order of business be changed to allow Agenda Item No. 10 - Strategy for School Consultation - to be taken immediately following Agenda Item No. 8.

2. MINUTE

The Education Executive confirmed the Minute of the meeting held on 23rd August 2011 as being a correct record subject to the following amendment being made to Page 191:

- Councillor Frank Anderson was in attendance at the meeting and was not substituted by Councillor John McGinty as recorded in the Minute.

3. SCHOOL BUSINESS CONTINUITY - SEVERE WEATHER/BUILDING CLOSURE

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Service, Schools with Education Support (copies of which had been circulated) on the outcome of a review of school business continuity in situations where there was severe weather/building closure.

The report recommended that the Education Executive accept the findings of the review and agree to Head Teachers and Parent Councils being updated on the guidance in line with the advice provided within the review. The report also advised that a short life working group (SLWG) had been established to evaluate and review existing policy and practice and to provide guidance for schools and parents in the event of future severe weather conditions or building closure. The review included identification of best practice in sustaining learning during closures and also service recovery following closure. Effective communication across all stakeholders affected by school closures was also reviewed.

Appendix 1 to the report outlined the issues considered by the SLWG and provided examples of good practice, advice and instruction for schools. The information was also shared with the Emergency Planning Officer

and the Corporate Communications team to ensure that the relevant elements were picked up and incorporated in arrangements for dealing with any subsequent severe weather/school closures.

In order to support schools, pupils and parents/carers to prepare for severe weather and potential school closures during 2011-2012 plans were made to hold a GLOW event to test that all pupils could access their GLOW accounts. Head Teachers had been instructed to update their business continuity arrangements in line with the arrangements outlined in Appendix 1.

Conclusion

To ensure that best practice in dealing with severe weather and building closure was achieved across all West Lothian schools the outcome of the review by the SLWG would be shared with Head Teachers and Parent Councils to mitigate the impact of such closures and improve communication across all stakeholders.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

4. SCHOOL REVIEW PROGRAMME SESSION 2011/12

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (copies of which had been circulated) which advised of the school review programme for Session 2011/2012 and reported on issues identified through the school review programme in Session 2010/2011.

West Lothian Council has a statutory obligation to monitor the quality of educational provision in its schools and ensure high quality learning and teaching, leadership and management with a focus on continuous improvement. The School Review Programme for 2010/2011 demonstrated that school staff were committed to improving their school through collegiate working and that there was evidence of good progress towards the implementation of a Curriculum for Excellence in all schools.

The report advised that the information gathered from the 2010/2011 reviews would be the focus of the 2011/2012 School Review Programme as follows:

- Self evaluation process and its impact on improvement;
- Implementation of Curriculum for Excellence and impact on learning;
- The effectiveness and impact of partnership working with the community, other educational establishments, agencies and employers;
- The quality of learning across stages and at transition points to ensure

continuity and progression; and

- How schools were using GLOW and other ICT to enhance learning experiences.

Conclusion

West Lothian Council was recognised as providing effective support and challenges to its schools and as providing a highly improved service.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

5. PRE-SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY AND PROCEDURE, WRAPAROUND CARE ADMISSION POLICY AND PROCEDURE AND ADDITIONAL YEAR OF PRE-SCHOOL AND SCHOOL EDUCATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Education Executive considered a report by the Depute Chief Executive (copies of which had been circulated) on the proposed revised policies and procedures for Pre-School Education, Wraparound Care and an Additional Year of Pre-School Education.

The report advised that the current policies and procedures provided an information pack for parents/carers and guidance notes, which were found to be duplicated information. The existence of multiple documents dealing with the same subject gave rise to the potential for inconsistency. In order to reduce the amount of information that parents/carers received and to reduce the potential for inconsistency between the separate documents, draft revised admission policies and procedures were prepared for Pre-school Education, Wraparound Care and an Additional Year of Pre-school. These combined all of the information previously contained within the policies, the information for parents' packs and the guidance notes.

The draft revised policies were intended to be more clear and concise increasing transparency and avoiding unnecessary duplication. They were a consolidation of present arrangements and would not lead to any change or variation of the admission arrangements for pre-school education. No changes to policy had been made but the opportunity had been taken to emphasise some existing aspects of policy, procedure and practice to increase clarity.

The only additional information that would be given to parents was a pack of information which required to be updated annually, comprising:

- Eligibility Dates for Pre-School Education
- Pre-school Establishment Contact Details
- Pre-school and Wraparound Establishments – Opening Times

- Wraparound Care Pupil Escort Service
- Pre-school Transport
- Wraparound Care Fees; and
- Useful Contacts.

Conclusion

The provision of more clear and concise information was intended to have a positive impact on parental satisfaction. The reduction in the amount of paper material sent to parents was an example of the ongoing work within the Pupil Placement Team to reduce administrative work and increase efficiency. This was reflected in staff reductions in line with the 'Tough Choices' agenda. Members were invited to approve the proposed revised admission policies and procedures for Pre-School Education, Wraparound Care and Additional Year of Pre-School and School Education.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

6. CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED INCREASE TO THE PROVISION MADE FOR S1 TO S6 PUPILS WHO HAVE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

The Education Committee considered a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (copies of which had been circulated) which provided information on the proposed increase to the provision made for S1 to S6 pupils who had Autism Spectrum Disorder.

The Standard in Scotland's School etc Act 2000 placed duties upon local authorities to ensure that schools meet the needs of all their pupils, encouraging the achievement of full potential and raising educational standard. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland Act) 2004 required Education Services to make adequate and efficient provision for the additional support needs of every child and young person for whom they were responsible and who required additional support for learning. Children and young people were defined as having additional support needs under the terms of the ASL Act if they required additional support to that which would normally be provided in their school to ensure they made good progress in their learning.

As part of the council's strategic planning for growth, there had been a need to increase provision for specialist primary Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Effective multi-agency working and robust assessment had enabled the identification of pupils who required a high level of targeted intervention, planning and individual support to access learning. The number of children diagnosed with autism had risen considerably in recent years and data indicated that this number would continue to grow.

As a result of the number of pupils who accessed primary specialist resources and the particular needs of these pupils, it was deemed necessary to increase secondary school provision. There were two specialist resources located in mainstream secondary schools which served pupils throughout West Lothian. These were based in James Young High School and St Kentigern's Academy. In total, 30 pupils accessed these specialist provisions, neither of which were able to accommodate a further increase in pupil roll.

Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the proposal to establish a resource for a maximum of 6 S1 to S6 pupils within Linlithgow Academy, which had sufficient and appropriate capacity. The proposal would ensure that pupils were taught within a mainstream school setting in line with the council's policies on inclusion and equality and national best practice. ASD provision aimed to cater for each pupil's specific need addressing both autism and learning. Emphasis was on social and communication skills, independent learning, sensory resilience and a clear and structured approach to learning within a safe and supported environment. The proposed resource would enable pupils to benefit from wider learning experiences and further development of independence as a necessary preparation for college, university or work.

Conclusion

West Lothian Council recognised that all children, young people and their families were entitled to be afforded equal opportunities to succeed. In order to continue to meet the specific needs of the pupils currently in specialist primary ASD resources, it was recommended that formal consultation on the proposed increase to secondary specialist ASD provision be undertaken.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

7. STRATEGY FOR SCHOOL CONSULTATIONS AUGUST 2011 - FEBRUARY 2012

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Service – Schools with Educational Support (copies of which had been circulated) which provided information on the ongoing need for a series of school consultations to support the council's development plan. An amendment to page 5, line 10 of the report was noted to reflect that outline planning permission for housing at Brucefield on the south side of the A71, immediately east and not west of West Calder High School as recorded in the report. This amendment did not affect the recommendation in the report.

The report informed the Education Executive that the nature of the schools consultations included school catchment area arrangements, primary school to secondary school transfer arrangements and the

location of new schools. The report also advised that the order in which these consultations commenced varied depending on the circumstances of individual development areas.

A series of school consultations were required to support development plan housing proposals. The West Lothian Local Plan supported a sustained level of growth with up to 25,000 houses planned. The Local Plan identified new schools and extensions to existing schools which were necessary to support this level of growth. The plan also acknowledged that catchment area arrangements also required to be amended. While there was uncertainty as to the rate of housing development there was extensive planning application coverage for much of the development proposed. The council had already completed some essential catchment arrangement reorganisation and it was necessary to continue this process so that development could proceed without unnecessary education infrastructure constraint. It was also necessary to ensure best use of existing school capacity, appropriate levels of occupancy, quality school provision and to respond to ongoing demographic change that would not be associated with the development plan.

The proposed school consultations would potentially cover a range of issues including catchment boundary review, primary school to secondary school transfer arrangements, the location of new schools and potentially a mix of all these issues. Each review would require a formal consultation to be undertaken. The duration of formal consultation process was governed by the requirements of the Education (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Each consultation required a minimum of five months for the complete consultation cycle to complete, from initial report preparation to finalised outcome report. The priority for catchment review varied according to the process being made with planning applications and/or local demographic change. In the short to medium term, the following areas were identified as catchment review priority areas:

- Armadale
- Bathgate
- West Calder/South Livingstn
- Winchburgh
- Linlithgow
- Broxburn

Information on school rolls were previously reported to committee in November 2010. It was proposed that statutory school consultations commenced in October 2011. The priority order for subsequent consultations would change according to circumstances, which would allow final consideration by the Education Executive to complete by February 2012. Benefits from the proposal included:

- Making best use of existing and future capacity;

- Support of housing development;
- Limiting the capital costs to developers;
- Limiting the capital and revenue costs to West Lothian Council; and
- Investment in existing school provision.

Conclusion

There was a need for West Lothian Council to undertake formal public consultations, in line with the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, to consider a range of proposals that would address school capacity and school catchment arrangements required to support the West Lothian Development Plan.

The consultations would vary according to the stage of the particular development. It was appropriate to prepare for a range of reviews and options to avoid unnecessary delay to development progressing. It was also essential to safeguard the council's capital and revenue funding base, particularly given current financial difficulties. It was noted that the initial consultations could be completed by February 2012 if started in October 2011.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report subject to an amendment to page 5, line 10 to reflect that outline planning permission for housing at Brucefield on the south side of the A71 was immediately east and not west of West Calder High School as indicated in the report.

8. BRUCEFIELD HOUSING DEVELOPMENT - SCHOOLS CATCHMENT REVIEW

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Planning and Economic Development (copies of which had been circulated) which provided details of the proposals for a formal public consultation to change the catchment boundary between Parkhead Primary and Bellsquarry Primary Schools as detailed in the appendix to the report. The existing catchment arrangement splits a proposed housing development site at Brucefield for both primary and secondary education.

The school catchments in this area were last reviewed in September 1998 in connection with West Calder High School. Since that date the West Lothian Local Plan identified housing development sites, which included the Brucefield site, within the Livingston and Almond Valley Core Development Area. Other sites have also been consented in the area. The scale of these developments meant that there was a need to review the current catchment arrangements to make most effective use of existing and future capacity of the schools in the area. The report advised that it was hoped that the consultation process would commence on 10th

November 2011 and conclude on 22nd December 2011

The Brucefield housing development site was crossed by non-denominational catchment boundaries for both primary and secondary education. The schools with catchment areas that included parts of the Brucefield site were:

- Bellsquarry Primary School
- Parkhead Primary School
- The James Young High School
- West Calder High School

A map showing the site and the position of the schools was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report and the existing catchment boundaries were shown in Appendix 2. The report advised that unless the catchment boundaries were modified they would cut across streets in the proposed development in what would appear to be an arbitrary fashion to new house owners leading to uncertainty about which schools children would attend. There was therefore a need to rationalise the catchment boundaries so that the full housing site was entirely within the one catchment area for primary and secondary education. It was proposed that the catchment boundaries at the Brucefield site be re-aligned with the west edge of the site so that it lies entirely in the catchment areas of the following schools which is detailed in Appendix 3 to the report:

- Bellsquarry Primary School
- The James Young High School

It was noted that there would be a possibility that the housing development would require an extension at Bellsquarry Primary School. A feasibility study for this had already been completed and any extension to increase capacity would be funded by the developer.

Benefits from a rationalisation of catchment areas would:

- Ensure the entire site was in the catchment area of only one non-denominational primary school;
- Provide a moderately short and safe walk to school for non-denominational primary pupils from the Brucefield site;
- Give long term placement for families; and
- Support effective community/school links.

Conclusion

Changes to catchment areas were required to enable further housing development and to meet the Council's statutory educational responsibilities. The changes outlined in the draft Consultation Paper

detailed in Appendix 4 to the report, would make best use of existing and future school capacities.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

9. BATHGATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS CATCHMENT CONSULTATION

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Planning and Economic Development (copies of which had been circulated) on the proposals for a school consultation to change the catchment areas of Bathgate primary schools to allow more effective use of existing and future capacity.

The Chair agreed to Appendix 3 and Appendix 10 of the draft Consultation Paper to be replaced with an updated version which was tabled at the meeting.

The report advised that Bathgate primary school catchment areas were last reviewed in September 2003 to set a catchment area for Simpson Primary School. A review of secondary school transfer arrangements for Torphichen, Seafield, Westfield and Windyknowe areas was completed in 2010. Major housing developments were planned in the Bathgate area which led to the need to review the existing catchment arrangements to make most effective use of existing and future capacity of the schools.

The schools with catchment areas in Bathgate were:

- Balbardie Primary School, Boghall Primary School, Simpson Primary School, St Columba's Primary School, St Mary's Primary School, Windyknowe Primary School, Armadale Academy (associated with Windyknowe), Bathgate Academy (associated with Balbardie, Boghall and Simpson) and St Kentigern's Academy (associated with St Columba's and St Mary's).

In total, 1991 houses – both development plan and other housing with agreed planning permissions – were projected to be built in the Bathgate area up to the year 2020. The school roll projections, based on the housing numbers were approved by the Education Executive on 23rd November 2010.

A map of the existing catchment areas of the non-denominational primary schools was outlined in Appendix 1 and the denomination (RC) primary school information detailed in Appendix 2. It was noted that there would be a requirement to monitor and review catchment area arrangements taking into account the scale of housing developments and local demographic changes taking place. There may, therefore, be a need for a further catchment review in the Bathgate area at some stage in the future.

It was proposed that catchment areas be modified to make best use of the

spare capacity at Boghall, Windyknowe and St Columba's primary schools. This would also change the catchment areas of the associated secondary schools. Transition arrangements would allow pupils in the affected areas to continue their education at their existing catchment schools, however, future pupils would be offered a place at the new catchment schools. Special arrangements would be in place for siblings to ensure that a family's children would be at the same school. The proposal was fully described in the draft Consultation paper at Appendix 6 to the report. The proposal for the consultation period was to commence on 25th October 2011 and finish on 6th December 2011.

Conclusion

Changes to catchment areas were required in the Bathgate area to enable further housing development and to meet the Council's statutory educational responsibilities. The changes outlined in the draft Consultation Paper would make best use of existing and future school capacities.

Decision

To approve the terms of the report subject to replacing Appendix 3 and Appendix 10 of the draft Consultation Paper with the updated version tabled at the meeting.