

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION EXECUTIVE of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 18 MARCH 2014.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Dodds, Frank Anderson (substitute for Peter Johnston), Stuart Borrowman, Tony Boyle, Harry Cartmill, Tom Conn, Alexander Davidson, Carl John, Dave King, Danny Logue, John McGinty, Anne McMillan, Angela Moohan, George Paul, Frank Toner and Jim Walker; Appointed Members Myra MacPherson, Lynne McEwen and Eric Lumsden.

Apologies – Councillors Peter Johnston and Andrew Miller; Appointed Members Elsie Aitken and Graham Stormont.

1. ORDER OF BUSINESS

Agenda Item 6: 2012 Base School Forecasts

The Chair ruled under Standing Order 11 that updated versions of appendices 1(a) and 2(a) be tabled.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

3. MINUTES

- a) The Education Executive confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 4 February 2014 as being a correct record. The Chair thereafter signed the minute.
- b) The Education Executive confirmed the minute of its special meeting held on 25 February 2014 as being a correct record, subject to noting that Myra MacPherson was in attendance at the meeting. The Chair thereafter signed the minute.

4. YOUTH MUSIC INITIATIVE YEAR 12

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated by the Head of Area Services providing details of the Youth Music Initiative (YMI) Year 12 application to Creative Scotland.

The Community Arts Co-ordinator explained that the Youth Music Initiative funding enabled schools to meet the Scottish Government target that *“all school children in Scotland should have access to 12 hours free music tuition by the time they reached Primary 6”*. This target was met by commissioning specialist individuals and organisations to deliver a range of music education projects to pupils in West Lothian.

The report advised that Community Arts successfully applied to Creative

Scotland for Year 11 funding for the YMI programme for 2013-14 and received the maximum award available of £246,228. The 2014-15 programme would run from August 2014 to June 2015 and included thirteen individual projects, details of which were summarised in the report, which also included investment in management, promotion and travel subsidy. West Lothian's allocation for the year 2014-15 was once again £246,228.

All contracts were advertised through Quick Quote. Contracts for the delivery of the projects outlined in the application would be awarded following confirmation of funding. The Year 12 application would be submitted to Creative Scotland by the deadline date of 20 March 2014. It was noted that the projects outlined in the YMI application were extremely beneficial to the young people who participated, providing opportunities for them to work closely with professional musicians, creating performance opportunities and developing their listening, creative and critical thinking skills. They would also develop increased self-confidence and self-esteem as well as having an enjoyable experience.

In conclusion, Community Arts would deliver and manage the 2014-15 YMI programme which would make a significant contribution to enabling the participants to embrace the principles and capacities of Curriculum for Excellence through a high quality programme of music-making activities.

It was recommended that the Education Executive approve the proposal for submission to Creative Scotland.

Decision

1. The Education Executive approved the terms of the report; and
2. Congratulated the service for the excellent results achieved through a high quality programme of music-making activities.

5. 2012 BASE SCHOOL FORECASTS

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning and Economic Development advising of the 2012 base school forecasts which would be used for future revenue and capital plans, pupil placement decisions, education planning and consultation and development plan consultations. The report also included an updated methodology summary. The Education Executive then considered the amended contents of appendices 1(a) and 2(a) (tabled at the meeting) which were updated to reflect current capacity figures for Armadale, Boghall, Simpson, St Paul's and Whitdale Primary Schools. The Planning and Information Manager also advised that the acronym AULP in the heading on appendix 2(a) was short for Base Audit and Local Plan Summary.

The report explained that medium term primary and secondary school forecasts were critical elements in the forward planning of revenue and capital investment in West Lothian. The current base forecast covered a

time range from school session 2012-2013 with forecast school rolls from 2014-2015 through to 2023-2024. The housing component of the forecast was based on Audit 13. The updated forecasts and methodology would be used in association with the SPG on Planning for Education.

The 2012 Base had been updated with the 2013 school census and would also be updated when the session 2014 pupil placement applications for P1 and S1 were determined in late March 2014. There was also a requirement for on-going monitoring to determine if revised methodological development was required and that any such changes were fit for purpose. The report went on to provide details of the current school roll forecast caveats for 0-18 year old population trends and for housing allocations post 2019. It was noted that whilst the trend in primary school rolls was generally downward in the last decade, this was reversing, short term at least, irrespective of economic conditions as the potential pupils had already been born and were living within West Lothian. It was likely that primary school rolls would increase and remain above the 2013 roll total of 14,888 pupils for the next four years for demographic reasons irrespective of new housing development.

Information on the 2012 base school roll forecast was summarised in the report and whilst both secondary school roll forecasts showed some decline in the last two years of the forecast time period, the anticipated growth in the 2016 and 2017 cohorts could completely remove the current forecast reductions. The Base Auditable Forecast, as detailed in the appendices attached to the report, highlighted an increase in total primary rolls from 14,685 pupils in school session 2012-13 to 16,108 pupils in school session 2023-24.

During the question and answer session the Education Executive was advised that a report would be submitted to a future meeting providing details in relation to the August 2014 intake for Armadale Primary School. A report would also be submitted to a future meeting of the Education Executive providing an update in relation to Simpson and Windyknowe Primary Schools.

In conclusion, the updated school roll projections indicated growth in the pre-school and primary sectors over the forecast period with a period of limited decline in secondary rolls. If there was more sustained housing recovery then school rolls would likely show stronger increases and less decreases. There was a need to continue to monitor the broader economic context in updating school rolls and projecting school capacity requirements. It was important to review forecasts in light of any material changes, such as demographics, but particularly so with house building completions as this was the greatest single factor influencing school roll forecasts. Further school consultation and capacity enhancement would be necessary to ensure sufficient pre-school and school places were available.

It was recommended that the Education Executive:

- Agree the forecast update on pupil rolls, including the assumptions and methodology applied in producing these data, and

- Agree the school roll forecasts as being the basis for future education provision planning and consultation on development planning.

Decisions

1. The Education Executive noted the updated appendices 1(a) and 2(a) tabled at the meeting;
2. Agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education Executive providing an update on the intake for Armadale Primary School relevant to the August 2014 intake;
3. Agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education Executive providing an update in relation to Simpson and Windyknowe Primary Schools; and
4. Agreed the terms of the report.

6. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT SUPPORT SERVICE (CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL) - EXEMPTION FROM STANDING ORDERS

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) seeking exemption from Council Standing Orders for the Regulation of Contracts in relation to the procurement of Visual Impairment Support Services (VISS) from the City of Edinburgh Council.

The Senior Education Development Manager advised that the Visual Impairment Support Services has worked in West Lothian Council's schools for a number of years, alongside other education staff and in collaboration with parents and carers, in supporting the educational and social progress of children and young people with significant levels of visual impairment. Without this specialised support being delivered directly to the pupils themselves and the on-going practical advice to those involved in their day-to-day education and care, many would otherwise require to be considered for specialist education while others would fail to maximise their educational potential and further/higher education and employment opportunities.

The Council's Standing Orders for Contracts states that officers cannot authorise an exemption from tendering procedures where the total cost of the contract was above £50,000. The Visual Impairment Support Service, was a specialist service whose practitioners were professionally trained and registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). The only available source of sufficient numbers of appropriately trained staff was the City of Edinburgh Council. An exemption from the Council's Standing Orders for Contracts Procedure was therefore sought as the cost of the contract was expected to be in the region of £65,000.

It was recommended that the Education Executive authorise the letting of a contract to the Visual Impairment Support Service without seeking

competitive quotes or tenders as a specific, specialist, provider was required.

Decision

The Education Executive approved the terms of the report.

7. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON DRAFT GUIDANCE TO EDUCATION AUTHORITIES, INDEPENDENT AND GRANT AIDED SCHOOLS ON THEIR DUTIES TO DEVELOP AND PUBLISH ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGIES

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) providing details of a response to the Scottish Government consultation on draft guidance to education authorities, independent and grant-aided schools on their duties to develop and publish Accessibility Strategies to improve access to the curriculum, school information and physical access. Appendix 1 to the report provided details of the response to the consultation and appendix 2 provided details of the current Accessibility Strategy Policy.

The report explained that the Scottish Government reviewed and refreshed the guidance which supported responsible bodies in fulfilling their duties to develop and publish Accessibility Strategies. The new guidance reflected current policy and legislative changes which took place since the development of the original legislation and guidance. The purpose of the guidance was to provide updated advice to local authorities and schools about how they could meet their duties to improve access to education for disabled pupils. Disabled learners faced particular barriers to learning however these barriers were not an inevitable result of their difficulties or medical conditions. The most significant disadvantages these learners experienced often stemmed from attitudinal and environmental factors, which could be changed.

Accessibility has been identified as a priority within both the approved Corporate Asset Management Strategy and Property Asset Management Plan. In relation to the school estate through the General Services Capital Programme (Property) a number of works were undertaken each year to improve accessibility for pupils to schools.

In conclusion, the guidance provided a clear summary of the legislative position as well as a very clear structure and guidance for local authorities on developing policy, procedure and best practice. Following publication of the guidelines, a multi-agency planning group would be formed to review and update the current West Lothian Council Education Services Accessibility Policy to fully reflect the aims of the national accessibility strategy as detailed in the new guidance.

It was recommended that the Education Executive agree to the response attached at appendix 1 to the report.

Decision

The Education Executive approved the terms of the report.

8. SQA RESULTS 2013 POST-APPEAL

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) advising of the post-appeal performance of West Lothian pupils in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) examinations in 2013.

The Customer and Performance Manager explained that post-appeal results were published in January 2014 and a broad analysis of the results was summarised in the report. Overall, performance has shown significant improvement in performance in S4 and S5 over the five year period from 2009 to 2013. Performance levels in West Lothian were above comparator and national averages.

The improvement achieved in West Lothian performance in SQA examinations was the result of an enhanced, strategic approach to raising attainment. Education Services had analysed the SQA 2013 data and had taken a number of key actions to further improve levels of attainment, which were summarised in the report, and included a more robust and challenging programme of monitoring levels of attainment, continued gathering of information to support Education Offices and schools in prioritising areas for improvement, grouping of local schools which encouraged schools to collaborate more effectively by sharing staff expertise and a sharper focus on improving attainment at Higher Grade across key subject areas, including English, Mathematics and the Sciences.

During the question and answer session the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) advised that a further report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education Executive providing details of the work carried out in West Lothian to sustain and develop levels of attainment.

In conclusion, the overall performance in SQA examinations continued to improve strongly and Education Services had taken and would continue to take appropriate actions to sustain and further develop levels of attainment.

It was recommended that the Education Executive:

1. Note the continuing improvement in SQA examination results; and
2. Congratulate pupils, parents and school staff on the continuing improvements.

Decisions

1. The Education Executive noted the contents of the report;

2. Agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Education Executive to provide an update on the work carried out to sustain and develop levels of attainment in schools across West Lothian; and
3. Congratulated pupils, parents and school staff for the continuing improvements in SQA examination results.