

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION EXECUTIVE of WEST Lothian COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 1ST FLOOR, WEST Lothian HOUSE, on TUESDAY 7 APRIL 2009.

Present – Leader of the Council Peter Johnston (Chair), Councillors Frank Anderson, Willie Boyle, John Cochrane, Martyn Day, Robert De Bold, Ellen Glass, Isabel Hutton, John McGinty, Andrew Miller, Cathy Muldoon (substituting for Lawrence Fitzpatrick) and Jim Walker; Robert Birrell and Myra MacPherson.

Apologies – Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick and Elsie Aitken.

Absent – Rev. Dr. Robert Anderson.

1. MINUTE -

The Education Executive confirmed the Minute of its Meeting held on 24th February 2009. The Minute was thereafter signed by the Chair.

2. PRIMARY CLASS SIZE REDUCTIONS -

West Lothian Council had made material progress in implementing class size reductions to 1:18 in P1-P3 as indicated in the Scottish Government Statistical Bulletin published on 24th February 2009. The provision of classes of 18 was supported by the allocation of fully funded probationers in session 2008/09 and a similar or greater allocation will be required in 2009/10 to maintain and enhance this provision.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) detailing the progress made in the introduction of a maximum class size of 18 pupils for P1-P3 in West Lothian.

The report outlined the comparative data of the percentage of pupils in classes of size 18 or less between 2004-2008 which, in West Lothian, had increased from 7.5% in 2004 to 24.8% in 2008. With the exception of Highland and Island rural areas of Scotland, Clackmannan and West Lothian had the highest performance on the measure for P1-P3 class size reductions.

The implementation of class size reductions was very challenging in West Lothian given the high pupil intakes and resultant high occupancy levels in schools across all sectors. Every year, class organisation in primary schools had an impact on the potential staff requirement and planned housing had an impact on class size reductions requirements.

It would be necessary for the current allocations within the 10-year capital programme for schools to be re-visited given the material reduction in capital resources due to recent falls in land values and the impact on the capital programme. The outcome of the review would be reported through the capital programme update reports prepared by the Head of

Finance.

The report advised that the Scottish Government had been notified that the council intended to take forward class size reductions in a flexible manner and address situations where the physical limitations of the building/site rendered the provision of additional classrooms impractical or uneconomic through pupil teacher ratios.

The council would continue to implement class size reductions on a year on year basis in line with the Scottish Government and COSLA Concordat Agreement. The adoption of a class committed pupil teacher ratio of 1:18, within available budgeted staff resources, would further enable progress in schools where accommodation was a constraint and would ensure children in areas of greatest deprivation would benefit from enhanced teacher support and get the best possible start to their school education.

A response to the report by the Teacher Representative on the Education Executive was tabled.

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

- a. Note the update on maximum class sizes of 18 pupils for P1-P3 in West Lothian schools for Session 2008-2009;
- b. In making further progress with class size reductions, continue to prioritise schools in areas of deprivation as measured by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation;
- c. Continue to implement class sizes of 1:18 where sufficient school accommodation was available;
- d. In schools where accommodation was a constraint, and budgeted staffing resources were available, agree to put in place a class committed pupil teacher ratio of 1:18 pupils; and
- e. Continue to report West Lothian performance of class size reductions on the basis of “% of P1-P3 pupils in classes of size 18 or less”.

Motion -

To approve the recommendations.

Moved by the Council Leader, seconded by Councillor Miller.

Amendment -

“The Education Executive recognizes the ongoing excellence achieved by teachers in West Lothian Schools and welcomes proposals to allocate additional teacher numbers at the P1 to P3 Primary Stages.

The Education Executive notes however the ongoing failure of the SNP led West Lothian Council administration to commit to a maximum class size of 18 or fewer for all West Lothian's P1 to P3 children by 2011 as promised by the Scottish Government.

The Education Executive therefore agrees to:

B. Recommendation

- Retain recommendations 1 to 4 as per the paper.
- At recommendation 5 include an additional measure for reporting on maximum class sizes of **% of P1 to P3 classes with a maximum of 18 pupils or fewer.**
- Include as recommendation 6 – A maximum class size of 18 pupils or fewer in all P1 to P3 classes in West Lothian Schools by 2011”.

Moved by Councillor McGinty, seconded by Councillor Muldoon

Decision -

On a vote being taken, the motion was successful by 11 votes to 2 votes, there having been 1 abstention, and it was agreed accordingly.

3. DRAFT DESIGN BRIEF FOR A MODEL PRIMARY SCHOOL -

The West Lothian Local Plan (WLLP) sought to implement the requirements of the Edinburgh and Lothians Structure Plan 2015. The WLLP supported a sustained level of growth with an allocation of up to 25,000 housing units. 12,000 of the new houses would be in three Core Development Areas (CDAs).

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) recalling the additional education provision that would be required to support the WLLP. The required new schools and additional streams of primary education would be funded by developer contributions. Some of the denominational sector additional requirements would also support development plan housing in rural West Lothian.

A design guideline document for schools entitled “More Than Just a Place to Learn” had been adopted by the council in October 2006 and was issued to all the developers involved in the proposed housing expansion in West Lothian. The guidelines articulated the council's aspirations for the quality of design, construction and finish of the new schools required to support development plan housing. Education Services had developed a draft design brief for a model primary school of 231 pupils (full single stream provision) and a model for 462 (full double stream provision). The model had been designed on the briefs and accommodation schedules for

Simpson Primary School, Bathgate and the proposed Pumpherston and Uphall Station Community Primary School.

The model brief would form the basis for detailed individual design briefs for the new schools and would ensure an equality of provision across the new primaries. Each school would have individual identities although the educational requirements for facilities would be similar. The adoption of the draft design brief would ensure appropriate modern educational provision for new development funded primary schools in West Lothian. A full consultation would be undertaken with key stakeholders once the draft brief had been agreed.

The Head of Education (Development) concluded that the adoption of the draft design brief for a model primary school would ensure appropriate modern educational provision for new developer funded primary school in West Lothian and recommended that the Education Executive:-

- Approves the format and content of the draft brief;
- Agrees that the draft brief be issued to key stakeholders for consultation; and
- Notes that the design brief would be that basis for site specific design briefs for the individual new primary schools.

Decision –

To approve the terms of the report.

4. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY -

At its meeting held on 23rd September 2008, the Education Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel had agreed the draft Parental Involvement Strategy for consultation.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) which advised that the draft Parental Involvement Strategy had been placed on the council's website on 1st November 2008, together with a consultation questionnaire. Parent Councils and Parent Associations had been issued with details of the website and had been invited to respond on the draft Strategy by 19th December.

Six responses had been received to the consultation, as detailed in the appendix to the report. Meetings of head teachers and the LNCT in the autumn term had approved the draft Strategy. The report described the changes that had been made to the draft Strategy as a result of the consultation exercise. In addition, comments made by the Education PDSP when it re-considered the report in March 2009 had also been included.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the Education Executive note the outcome of the consultation on the draft Parental Involvement Strategy and agree to formally adopt, as policy, the Parental Involvement Strategy.

Decision –

To approve the terms of the report.

5. COLLECTIONS AND TRADING IN SCHOOLS POLICY -

The Collections and Trading in School Policy dated from 1996 and prohibited trading activity except for school photographs, tuck shop and book sales. The policy ensured that schools were not seen as favouring one trader over another, or endorsing any product or service in which it may have no expertise or quality control. It also avoided schools becoming markets in which pupils and their parents were targeted for profit.

The Education Executive considered a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) explaining that as many schools now found it desirable to facilitate the purchase by parents of items of school dress and diaries/year books, the Collections and Trading in Schools policy had been revised.

The report provided full details of the amendments suggested to the policy to allow schools to function effectively to the benefit of children and families while preserving the general principle that commercial activities were not promoted to pupils or parents. The suggested amendments had been discussed at meeting of the LNCT, Head Teachers and with Parent Council representatives.

The report concluded that the inclusion of the further trading activities would add to the effectiveness of schools and offer helpful services to families, whilst the statements on enterprise, donations and sponsorship, collections for charity and advertising had been added for clarity.

In response to a question, the Director of Education and Cultural Services re-assured members that schools would be able to continue to collect uninhibited where missions linked with the ethos of the school.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the Education Executive approve the amendments to the collections and trading in schools policy to permit the additional specified commercial activities.

Decision –

To approve the terms of the report.

6. CONFERENCES AND COURSES -

The Education Executive considered attendance at the Conference for Church Representatives on Education Committees to be held in Glasgow on 1st June 2009 at a cost of £40 per delegate.

Decision -

To approve attendance at the conference by the three religious representatives on the Education Executive.