

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within LOWPORT OUTDOOR EDUCATION CENTRE, LINLITHGOW, on TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2009.

Present – Councillors Andrew Miller (Chair), Jim Walker (Vice Chair), Ellen Glass, Dave King (substituting for Lawrence Fitzpatrick), Greg McCarra and John McGinty; Mrs Elsie Aitken.

Apology – Councillor Lawrence Fitzpatrick

1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor McCarra declared a non-financial interest in Item No. 13 as he was a member of the EIS Council.

2. MINUTE

The Panel confirmed the Minute of its Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2009.

3. CENTRAL EDUCATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN

Understanding the value of effective planning and committed to its principles as a means of delivering outcomes effectively and efficiently, the council had identified Management Plans as an essential driver for the provision of excellent services.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) and Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) presenting the Central Education Services Management Plan for 2009/10. The plan was the collection of WLAM service units under the responsibility of Heads of Education Development and Education Quality Assurance.

Containing critical information on the management of the service area, the plan provided an overview of:-

- The services and activities that Central Education Services provided
- The aims and objectives of the service that were to be communicated to elected members, staff and partners
- How successes would be measured and the targets that were to be achieved
- The improvement activities that the service was committed to completing in order to change or improve services

The plan would be used 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).

The Heads of Education (Development) and (Quality Assurance) recommended that the panel note the terms of the Management Plan.

#### Decision

To note the Central Education Services Management Plan.

#### 4. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN WEST LOTHIAN: PROGRESS REPORT

The “Report of the Review Group on Physical Education 2004” had stated that the overarching objective was to increase participation in physical education and for more young people to be more active, more of the time.

In addition, the “Health and Sport Committee Report” May 2009 reinforced the Review and that physical education “was the ONLY comprehensive and educationally sound way to have to ensure that ALL children and young people learned the skills and understandings necessary for living a physically active life”.

The four key areas identified by the Review that could effect change were:

- Improving the curriculum
- Increasing participation in physical education
- Supporting teachers
- Improving facilities

There was a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) detailing the progress that had been made to implement the recommendations contained within the Physical Education (PE) Review 2004.

The report provided members with full information on the work that had been undertaken to improve the curriculum, increasing participation in physical education in West Lothian schools, support for teachers and improvement in facilities.

Schools were working towards delivering A Curriculum for Excellence, Health and Wellbeing and were making good progress towards the provision of high quality physical education with a baseline target of two, 50 minute periods. Additionally, a strong joined up approach to PE, physical activity and sport had been fostered across the council.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) recommended that the Education Executive note the progress in physical education in West Lothian, delivered through the formal and informal curriculum.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

5. DRAFT PROCEDURE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ATTENDANCE GROUPS

The Council had endorsed the approach adopted in the Scottish Government publication “Included, Engaged and Involved, Part 1: Attendance in Scottish Schools” (12 December 2007).

There was a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) recalling the importance of attendance at school being clearly linked to schools’ overall approaches to promoting positive behaviour and a climate for learning. The Attendance at School policy had been adopted in 2008. In a few cases however, supportive action had not ensured an improvement in attendance at school.

The report advised of the proposal to create Attendance Groups to allow local actions to be applied in order to improve attendance at schools. As Social Policy and Education & Cultural Services both had responsibility for school attendance, the membership of the Attendance Groups would be drawn equally from senior officers of both services

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) recommended that given Head Teachers and officers from Social Policy and Education & Cultural Services considered the Attendance Groups would support parents/carers and families in ensuring regular attendance at school, the proposed establishment of Attendance Groups be referred to the Education Executive for approval.

Decision

To note the terms of the report and endorse it for submission to the Education Executive.

6. AMENDMENTS TO THE EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL POLICY

The guidance contained in the council’s Exclusion from School Policy had been reviewed in light of equalities legislation, the Education Scotland (Additional Learning Needs) 2004 Act and updated guidance from the Scottish Government.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) (which had been circulated) advising that a full impact assessment of the current

Exclusion from School Policy had been carried out. Current Scottish Government advice was that ten days should be the maximum length of exclusion in any one period. The changes recommended to the policy arising from the review were listed in full in the appendix to the report.

The revised policy would ensure that all schools met the legal requirements in the application of exclusion procedures and would support them in providing a positive learning environment for all children and young people. The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) recommended that the report be presented to the Education Executive for approval.

In response to a suggestion, Legal Services would be asked to provide training for members of the West Lothian Council (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee on the updated policy and other relevant policies.

### Decisions

- (i) To note the report and endorse it for submission to the Education Executive for approval.
- (ii) To note that training on the amended policy would be offered to all members of the West Lothian Council (Placing in Schools) Appeals Committee.

## 7. REVIEW OF NURSERY ADMISSION CRITERIA

Admission criteria for pre-school and ante pre-school provision had been raised by a range of stakeholders in recent years. At the meeting of the Education Executive held on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2008, following earlier discussion by the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel, members agreed there was a need to carry out further studies on pre-school admission arrangements to be reported through the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

On 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008, the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel had noted that the Director of Education and Cultural Services would engage a suitably qualified person to undertake a review of the current pre-school admission arrangements and make recommendations for improvement.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) advising that the review of nursery admission criteria had now been undertaken by a former Head Teacher of a West Lothian Pre-School. An appendix to the report provided the Panel with a copy of the review findings of the review.

The report provided a brief outline of the pre-school context and full information on customer feedback and complaints and the responses to the issues raised during the consultations and related recommendations.

Comments on the report by the LNCT were tabled at the meeting.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the panel note the recommendations arising from the review as undernoted and refer the report to the Education Executive for approval.

- (a) To establish a Pre-School Planning Group to oversee the assessment of demand and staff deployment within available resources and arrangements for the sensitive management of any required provision changes. The group would clarify on an ongoing basis the required capacity at establishments.
- (b) To extend the remit of the Early Years Monitoring Group to monitor the operation of the Early Years Admission Panel and the Pre-School Planning Group and provide comment for an annual report to the Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel along with data on the number and nature of complaints on pre-school placements.
- (c) To plan core staffing for pre-school provision based on January intakes and forward plan staff deployment through the Pre-School Planning Group.
- (d) To review the number of places that were required through pre-school partnership arrangements and consider where appropriate direct council delivery where this would meet parent demand and an efficient use of resources, to be done within contract review arrangements.
- (e) To review with Finance Services the requirement for a link between pre-school placement and the wraparound care services.
- (f) To consider the implications of an annual allocation of pre-school places in May of each year and give greater emphasis to residence within a town/village geographic area in the planning of provision and allocation of pre-school and ante pre-school places taking account of January and Easter intakes. The full system would be rolled out over the next two pre-school admission years and be fully in place for the August 2010, January 2011 and Easter 2011 intakes.
- (g) To review the effectiveness of all communication and user information through the Early Years Monitoring Group including consideration of the issues raised through pre-school admission complaints.
- (h) To consider the feasibility of recording all external phone calls to the Pupil Placement Team.
- (i) To clarify for all applicants that pre-school admission complaints

should be addressed to the Head of Education (Development) and that complaints would be dealt with in line with Education and Cultural Services policies.

As members of the panel had a number of questions they wished to discuss in more detail with the author of the review report, they wished the report to be continued to the August meeting and for the report author to be invited along to answer their questions.

#### Decisions

- (i) That the report be amended to incorporate the view of the panel and the LNCT and re-submitted for consideration at the PDSP meeting in August 2009.
- (ii) That the Head of Education (Development) invite the author of the review report to the August meeting to answer questions on the findings of the review by the panel.

#### 8. WRAPAROUND CARE

The Wraparound care service had initially been set up in areas of deprivation in order to support families back to work or further education. The service had thereafter been expanded to areas of high demand. At present, the council had 14 pre-school centres providing 284 registered wraparound care places used by around 450 children aged 3-8 years. The service aimed to provide high quality wraparound care integrated with pre-school provision.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) providing members with an update on the wraparound care service and proposing that a review of the wraparound care service be undertaken to enable the development of a more sustainable business model.

The report explained that the expansion of the service had resulted in an increase level of subsidy being required over recent years. Efforts had been made to reduce the burden through effective debt management, introduction of advance billing and tighter control of service availability. The service had also been rationalised over the past two years during school holiday periods to ensure a high quality care experience for children in the most appropriate setting as well as improved financial viability of the service.

A consultation had been undertaken in October 2008 with parents/carers, staff and children in order to put in place the most appropriate structure of provision across the county and ensure effective use of resources. The arrangement had improved the financial position of the service by around £115,000. There was a need to improve the business model to achieve greater financial efficiency while maintaining a high quality service at reasonable cost to service users.

The report went on to outline reasons why it was not possible to operate wraparound care provision at full capacity and of the findings of research which had been undertaken with Internal Audit in 2007-08.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that a full review of the wraparound care service be undertaken to improve the business efficiency of the service, particularly in light of the review of pre-school admission criteria and the development of the Out of School Care Social Enterprise Model, with a view to the revised arrangements being put in place for financial year 2010-2011. The review would include staffing arrangements which varied across the service and consultation with current and potential customers.

The Education Executive was also invited to agree that for Session 2009-2010, no wraparound care service would be provided on public holidays.

Councillor McGinty expressed his group's concerns that the proposed review could lead to a cut in affordable childcare and stated that they would not be supporting the recommendation of the Head of Education (Development).

#### Decision

To approve the terms of the report subject to changing the wording under recommendation 4 to read "Examination of the necessity to link pre-school placement criteria and wraparound care provision".

### 9. PRE-SCHOOL PARTNER PROVIDER FUNDING LEVELS

Funding for pre-school education places was contained within the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) provided by the Scottish Government to local authorities to help finance the cost of all services.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) recalling that between 2002 and 2008, Scottish Ministers had issued an advisory floor rate for pre-school education which set a minimum payment level for each pre-school education place purchased by a local authority from partner providers. Partner funding had been included in the pre-school education sector of the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) allocation from the Scottish Government, although the use of funding had not been prescriptive.

The terms of the Concordat between Scottish Government and COSLA in 2007 gave local authorities greater flexibility and responsibilities resulting in the Scottish Government having less involvement in micro managing local authorities.

The quality of pre-school education as measured by HMIE and the Care Commission was a national indicator in the National Performance Framework. In accordance with the Concordat, that indicator would now

be the focus of accountability, rather than control over inputs such as funding levels. As a result, the Scottish Government had decided that it was no longer appropriate to issue an advisory floor level and that local authorities should decide what constituted an appropriate level to pay partner providers for a pre-school education place, taking account of cost trends in the sector and local economic conditions.

The report went on to explain that in session 2008-09, partner provider funding levels were set at £1590. The Head of Education (Development) proposed that for session 2009-10, partner providers be paid £1630 for each pre-school place, representing an increase of 2.5%. The 2.5% increase took cognisance of the teachers' annual pay award and it was proposed that the 2009-10 and all future increases to the advisory floor level be directly linked to the teachers' national pay award.

#### Decision

To note the terms of the report and refer it to the Education Executive for approval.

#### 10. PROGRESS REPORT ON OUT OF SCHOOL CARE SOCIAL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Volunteer parent committees currently managed the independent Out of School Care (OOSC) in West Lothian. Following high-level consultation between the committees and the council, it had been agreed that the sector would benefit from a move to a more professional management structure that would ensure a more robust, sustainable and high quality provision. It was considered that the creation of a single organisation to deliver out of school care would enable the sector to be sustained. The preferred governance structure that had met with stakeholders overall approval was a Social Enterprise: a Charitable Company Ltd by Guarantee. In December 2007 the initial business plan had been developed and secured an outline funding commitment of £750,000 over 5 years from the council and the "in principle" agreement of 14 mainstream out of school care organisation in November 2008 to develop the new business.

There was a report by the Head of Education (Development) (which had been circulated) providing members with an update on the progress made towards developing the single social enterprise organisation for Out of School Care in West Lothian. The report explained that the Social Enterprise OOSC Working Group had been created and that agreement had been reached on five main areas of the new business including Governance, Staff Management, Financial Management, Quality and Transition. Full details on the decisions agreed by the working group were provided in the appendix to the report.

The report outlined the current position and issues impacting on the development including communication problems between clubs, the



changing economic environment and the potential need for new out of school care clubs.

In addition, an alternative strategy had been investigated to identify a local and successful social enterprise with childcare experience to work in partnership to support the development of the new enterprise and new local OOSC provision. It was anticipated that developing partnership with an existing social enterprise would allow more opportunities to access external funding and offer a higher level of financial and quality management

The Broxburn Family and Community Development Centre had been invited to work in partnership with the council on progressing the OOSC. The Group was a social enterprise that provided support for families to become economically active through adult education, outreach programmes and childcare. Over the last 21 years, the group had worked in partnership with the council to develop a number of key projects across West Lothian. They had shown significant expertise managing and growing a successful social enterprise.

The Head of Education (Development) recommended that the Education Executive approve the development of a supportive partnership with the Broxburn Family and Community Development Centre.

#### Decision

To approve the terms of the report.

### 11. SCHOOL LINK OFFICERS: PILOT PROJECT

Projects across Scotland had demonstrated that close partnership working with the Police enhanced the school experience for all children, particularly at secondary school stage.

There was a report by the Director of Education and Cultural Services (which had been circulated) advising of the proposal to agree a pilot project with F Division Lothian and Borders Police, where a full time police officer would be based in two secondary schools to work 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 two schools selected to take part in the project were Bathgate Academy and Deans Community High School. Both schools had been involved in proposing a set of aims for the project which included:

- Reducing the incidents of anti-social behaviour and victimisation amongst young people
- Providing a safe and secure school community which would

enhance the learning environment

- Engaging with young people, challenging unacceptable behaviour and helping them develop a respect for themselves and their community
- Ensuring that young people remained in education, actively learning and achieving their full potential

Funding of the two officers would be shared between the council and the police. The project would be reviewed by education officers and senior police officers in June 2010 using performance indicators agreed between the two services.

The Director of Education and Cultural Services recommended that the pilot scheme be endorsed by the panel and referred to the Education Executive for approval.

#### Decision

To endorse the proposed pilot scheme and refer the report to the Education Executive for approval.