

MINUTE of MEETING of the EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LOTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LOTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 6 SEPTEMBER 2016.

Present – Councillors Lawrence Fitzpatrick (Chair), David Dodds, Stuart Borrowman, John McGinty, Andrew Miller, Jim Walker; Appointed Representatives Elsie Aitken, Eric Lumsden, Lynne McEwen, John MacKinnon, Myra Macpherson and Margaret Russell.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Education Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel confirmed the minute of its meeting held on 17 May 2016. The minute was then signed by the Chair.

3. NURTURE PROVISION UPDATE

(a) Presentation by Liesel Harvey, Nurture Development Officer

Liesel Harvey had been invited to the meeting to provide an overview of Nurture Group work and its impact on individual children.

Liesel presented slides showing the number of schools, staff and pupils involved in nurture support. It was noted that, based on audit information, at least 779 pupils were being supported by nurture across the authority (648 primary, 131 secondary).

Work had been done to support and develop staff through training events, network meetings and development visits.

Liesel explained that although Nurture was focused on supporting social and emotional behavioural development, schools were already reporting an impact on skills for learning.

Based on feedback from 29 primary schools:

- 73% said that Nurture Groups had a positive impact on most/almost all children's social and emotional behavioural development; and
- 71% said Nurture Groups had a positive impact on most/almost all children's skills for learning.

The Panel then heard details of opportunities for children for developing skills for learning such as listening and talking skills, perseverance, relationship building, resilience, creativity and

confidence.

Liesel Harvey and Jennyfer McNiven then responded to questions raised by Panel members.

Finally, the Chair thanked Liesel and Jennyfer for their informative presentation.

(b) Report by Head of Education (Development)

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Development) informing the Panel of the impact of Nurture Groups and providing an interim evaluation of the impact of the work.

The report contained information on staff development and training, engagement of children and young people, school self-evaluation data and challenges.

In relation to challenges, it was noted that funding would continue into session 2016-17 for all 45 primary schools on a reduced basis. The focus would be on embedding nurture practice across the authority and looking at a nurturing schools approach.

The Head of Education (Development) concluded that the interim evaluation provided valuable information to demonstrate the impact of nurture on targeted groups of pupils and at whole school level. The Education Psychology Service was keen to continue to build on this and ensure sustainability of nurture approaches. Management and identified additional staff would continue to be supported by the Nurture Team to lead and facilitate developments in their own setting.

Finally, it was noted that there would be further evaluation in July 2017.

Questions raised by Panel members were then dealt with by the Head of Education (Development) and the Principal Educational Psychologist.

The Panel was asked to note the information contained in the evaluation report.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the presentation.
2. To note the terms of the report by the Head of Education (Development).
3. To record the Panel's appreciation of the work undertaken by Liesel Harvey and members of staff in the Nurture Team and Educational Psychology Service.

4. ADAPTIVE TESTING IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS 2015/16

(a) Presentation by Michael Davis, Performance and Information Officer

Michael Davis, Performance and Information Officer presented detailed statistical information on School Adaptive Testing.

Michael presented a number of graphs showing an improvement on previous years in developed ability, reading, general mathematics and mental arithmetic at primary stage.

For secondary adaptive testing, the scores in each of the key areas of Reading, Mathematics and Science were not significantly different from the Scottish average score, or results in previous years.

(b) Report by Head of Education (Development)

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Development) updating the Panel on performance in adaptive tests following analysis of the fourth set of results (2016) derived from tests in all Primary Stages 2 to 7 and Secondary S2.

The report summarised outcomes for 2015/16 in both primary and secondary adaptive testing and provided a list of actions that had or would be taken to secure improvements.

It was recommended that the Panel note:-

- The general upward trend over the last three years in developed ability, reading, general mathematics and mental arithmetic at the primary stage.
- That value continued to be added at all primary stages, and the areas where improvement would be prioritised.
- That average scores increased overall as levels of deprivation decreased, and that developments focused on closing the attainment gap would continue to be prioritised.
- That performance at S2 showed a small increase in mathematics, where previous improvement efforts had been focused.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the presentation by the Performance and Information Officer; and
2. To note the terms of the report by the Head of Education (Development).

5. EDUCATION SERVICES MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report had been circulated by the Heads of Education enclosing a copy of the Education Services Management Plan for 2016/17.

The Management Plan contained information on the management of the service area and provided an overview of:-

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

The Panel was informed that the Education Services Management Plan for 2016/17 had been scrutinised by the Culture and Leisure PDSP.

The Panel was asked to scrutinise and note the Management Plan, a copy of which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Service Manager responded to questions raised by Panel members and, in particular, he informed the Panel that the number of primary schools required to be updated (Management Plan, page 3).

In relation to Customer Participation (Management Plan, page 109), the Service Manager advised that consideration would be given to including information on outcomes within this section of the document.

Decision

To note the report and the Education Services Management Plan for 2016/17.

6. ACTIVE SCHOOLS PERFORMANCE REPORT 2015-16

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) informing the Panel on the progress made in West Lothian in relation to the key areas of work undertaken by the Active School team.

Appendix 1 was the Active Schools Service Overview document providing clarity regarding the provision of the service and both local and national outcomes for Active Schools. The ASSO identified 11 key areas of work and formed the basis of the report.

Appendix 2 was an updated ASSO which would ensure clarity on service provision and the basis of future planning and reporting.

The report went on to provide commentary in relation to the 11 key areas of work.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) concluded that West Lothian Active Schools had delivered record levels of participation during the academic session 2015/16. Continued investment into competitive school sport, and strong partnership working with schools, had seen a significant increase in the number of West Lothian pupils achieving excellence at regional and national level.

In 2016-17, Active Schools and West Lothian Council's Sport Development team would become integrated to form the 'Active Schools and Community Sports team'. The new management structure would make certain the same high quality of service provision was maintained for partners and stakeholders.

It was recommended that the Panel note the performance of the Active Schools service over the academic session 2015-16 and the areas identified for development for the remainder of the current 2015-19 partnership agreement.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

7. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE - PLAN FOR FLEXIBILITY AND CHOICE - UPDATE

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Development) informing the Panel of the implementation of the council's Plan to Increase the Flexibility in Early Learning and Childcare and to meet the needs of working parents, and future development of the Plan.

The Panel was informed that, under section 52 of the Act, education authorities were required to have regard to the desirability of ensuring that the method by which it made early learning and childcare provision available was flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the service.

The aim of the Act was that children experienced consistent high quality early learning and childcare, and alleviated the need for parents to change their child's provider during the day to provide additional hours due to a model of funding and placements based on one session of 2.5 hours a day. The Act envisaged that longer sessions of early learning and childcare should be available through local authorities for parents who needed it.

The report went on to advise that the Council had consulted parents in 2013 and 2015 on how they would like to see flexibility and choice in pre-school provision increased. Following the consultations, the Education executive had agreed a Plan to Increase Flexible Provision. The plan focused on the introduction and expansion of flexible model of early

learning and childcare, and the expansion of wraparound (out of school) care.

The Panel noted that, as a result of the 2013 consultation, a new model of pre-school provision had been piloted at four establishments in Session 2015/16. This had proved popular and following the 2015 consultation, it was proposed that the new model of provision would be available at ten establishments in Session 2016/17. The report provided details of the new model of provision.

The Head of Education (Development) advised that wraparound care was provided at all of the venues offering the flexible model of early learning and childcare. The number of children accessing wraparound places had increased from session 2014/15 to 2016/17.

The next consultation on the expansion of flexibility and choice in Early Learning and Childcare was scheduled for the second half of 2017. It was anticipated that national changes to the provision of early learning and childcare would shape the consultation.

In the meantime, it was proposed that authority be delegated to the Head of Education (Development) to extend the provision of the flexible model of early learning and childcare, and wraparound care places, where demand for these services existed and there was available capacity within the school estate to make provision. It was anticipated that this would result in increased provision being offered in session 2017/18 to accompany planned expansion to the pre-school estate.

The Panel was recommended to:-

1. note the implementation of the council's Plan to Increase the Flexibility in Early Learning and Childcare and meet the needs of working parents.
2. recommend approval to the Education Executive of the proposed future development of the Plan to Increase the Flexibility in Early Learning and Childcare by delegating the decision to establish additional full day early learning and childcare places and wraparound care establishments to the Head of Education (Development) to facilitate flexibility and choice, and to meet the needs of working parents.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To agree that the report be forwarded to the Education Executive; and
3. To recommend to the Education Executive that the proposed future development of the Plan be approved by delegating the decision to establish additional full day early learning and childcare places and wraparound care establishments to the Head of Education (Development) to facilitate flexibility and choice, and to meet the needs of working parents.

8. HOLIDAY LUNCH AND ACTIVITY CLUBS

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Development) informing the Panel of the implementation of Holiday Lunch and Activity Clubs.

The report recalled that, at its meeting of 23 February 2016, the Council had agreed to introduce school holiday lunch and activity provision, and had agreed a budget of £200,000 per year to support this activity in financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18.

The report went on to advise that direct provision of nutritious meals and fun activities had been made in five communities for a five week period from Monday 11 July to Friday 12 August 2016. The five communities were listed in the report. The communities and schools chosen were based on levels of free meal uptake and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking, but also suitability of accommodation.

The number of children provided for each day at each school was set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

In addition to the five school based provisions, nutritious meals had been provided in a further two communities in partnership with established community organisations which provided activities for the children attending. The community organisations were:-

Boghall Drop In Centre
Sunshine Club

Riverside Play Scheme

The report provided details of the average daily attendance (175). The total number of registrations at school provision was 187, with an additional 146 registered at the partnership provisions.

In relation to Council venues, feedback from children was positive. Appendix 3 to the report provided comments by parents/carers for each of the five school based provisions.

The Panel was informed that the number of council venues at which direct provision of lunch and activities could be made had been constrained by the availability of suitably qualified council staff during school holidays, the ability to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff for a limited number of hours per day, the suitability of council accommodation, the other uses being made of council accommodation and the school maintenance programme.

In relation to future provision, it was intended to make some provision in October 2016 during the one week school holiday. The same communities would be targeted with a view to increasing attendance as parents/carers became more familiar with the availability of the provision in these communities.

The Head of Education (Development) concluded that Holiday Lunch and Activity Clubs had provided meals and fun physical activities to approximately 165 children per day, in 7 venues, targeted at areas with high free school meal entitlement and SIMD ranking, with a high proportion of those attending being in receipt of free school meals. The provision compared favourably to examples considered by the All Party Parliamentary Group on School Food published in 2015.

In response to an issue raised by Councillor Miller concerning the methodology for selecting communities and schools, officers advised that the planning of future provision would take account of the experience of the first summer's provision. Officers would also consider the issue raised by Councillor Miller that Deans Primary School had not been included as a targeted school and children from that community had missed out.

The Panel was asked to note the implementation of Holiday Lunch and Activity Clubs.

Decision

To note the terms of the report.

9. SCOTTISH ATTAINMENT CHALLENGE INNOVATION FUND

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education (Quality Assurance) informing the Panel of the successful bids made by the Education Service for grant funding from the Scottish Attainment Challenge Innovation Fund.

The Head of Education (Quality Assurance) advised that the aim of the Scottish Attainment Challenge was to narrow the attainment gap at all levels and in all school sectors. An innovation fund of £1.5m had been announced in February 2016 to help schools across Scotland come up with innovative ways to improve attainment.

Of the £1.5m allocation to the fund for academic session 2016-17, schools and officers from West Lothian had submitted six successful bids for grant funding totalling £235,851.

The report provided a table showing the total funding allocation as undernoted:-

School	Total Funding Allocation
Bathgate Academy Cluster	£39,704
Broxburn Academy	£7,520
Linlithgow Academy	£10,000
Outdoor Learning	£120,900

Riverside Primary School	£10,000
The James Young High School Cluster	£47,727
Total	£235,851

The report went on to provide details of the six projects.

The Panel noted that, in total, pupils within four secondary schools and 23 primary schools in West Lothian would benefit from the £235,851 successful bids to the Innovation Fund.

Each of the six initiatives would address a different aspect of the challenge in raising attainment. The Education Service would assist schools in evidencing progress within each of the initiatives to support improvement in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

The Panel was asked to note the successful bids for funding as outlined in the report.

Decision

1. To note the terms of the report.
2. To convey the Panel's thanks to staff involved in the submission of the bids.

10. OUT OF SCHOOL CARE – CONSULTATION

A report had been circulated by the Head of Education Development informing the Panel of a proposal to consult parents on out of school care provision.

The Panel was informed that, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, local authorities were required to consult representative populations of parents on whether discretionary day care and out of school care for children not in need under the Children (Scotland) 1995 Act, should be provided or supported. There was a requirement to publish a plan in response to the consultation. The Act did not place any requirement on authorities to deliver services which were discretionary.

The Head of Education (Development) proposed to consult parents of school age children using text messaging to inform parents/carers of an online consultation questionnaire. This method would cover the parents/carers of children both in need and not in need as defined by the 1995 Act, achieving the integration recommended in guidance. This method was expected to cover working parents, minority ethnic populations, hard to reach parents, parents of children with a disability or additional support needs; and parents with support needs.

Parents would be asked to complete an online survey, a copy of which

was attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

The Panel noted that the results would be used to enable the council to determine whether to provide additional out of school care to those children not defined as in need. The results would be shared with colleagues in Social Policy to inform planning of provision for children defined as in need.

During discussion, Councillor Miller commented that he considered that the range of parents to be consulted should include those with pre-school age children.

The Panel was asked to note the proposed consultation on out of school care.

Decision

1. To note that Panel members supported the consultation on out of school care as outlined in the report; and
2. To record that Councillor Miller had asked officers to consider including parents of pre-school age children in the consultation.

11. WORKPLAN 2016-17

A copy of the Workplan 2016/17 had been circulated for information.

Decision

To note the Workplan.