

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 3 October 2019.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)  
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)  
Councillor Caroline Bamforth  
Councillor Charlie Gilbert

Councillor Alan Lafferty  
Councillor Gordon Wallace  
Dr Frank Angell  
Ms Dorothy Graham  
Mr Des Morris

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

**Attending:**

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

**Also attending:**

Rosemary Crossan, Head Teacher and Marie Kane, Depute Head Teacher, St John’s Primary School; and Andy Sinclair, Head Teacher, and Patricia Morrison, Principal Teacher, Barrhead High School.

**Apology:**

Councillor Danny Devlin.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1059.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE - REPORT ON REGIONAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2018/19**

**1060.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing it of the evaluation of work undertaken by the West Partnership of the Glasgow Region Education Improvement Collaborative during 2018/19. A copy of the report on the progress with and impact of the Phase 2 Improvement Plan was included as an appendix to the report.

The Director reported that the Partnership's work had been evaluated under 8 key headings reflecting its Improvement Plan and other work. These included, amongst others, the establishment of collaborative learning networks; career-long professional learning; families and communities; and leadership. Other areas of work undertaken had included development of the Partnership's online presence; consultation with practitioners and key stakeholders; resources; and developing strong partnership arrangements with Education Scotland. Overall, the Partnership had made excellent progress in implementing the Phase 2 Improvement Plan with 94% of actions being either complete, superseded or on track. She concluded by explaining that the report had been endorsed by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 27 August and submitted to Education Scotland by the due date of 2 September.

In response to Councillor Wallace who asked if any concerns had been raised within the Partnership with regards the ongoing implementation of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), the Director reported that no major concerns regarding CfE had been raised at the recent Primary Head Teacher's conference. She also explained that a refresh of CfE had been undertaken and that the Scottish Government had confirmed its commitment to CfE. She went on to explain that the objective of CfE was to focus on skills as well as knowledge with a view to producing well rounded young people.

She continued by explaining the importance of the role of families and communities in raising attainment. She highlighted the involvement of third sector bodies in this work and commended the value of family wellbeing workers across the authority in supporting families to support their children, an approach which benefitted both parents/carers and young people.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report and the fact that East Renfrewshire had been instrumental in supporting the concept of regional collaboratives, and commended the Director for her strong leadership in taking the West Partnership forward for the benefit of all children and young people across the Glasgow City Region.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane echo the comments made by Councillor Buchanan and others and welcome the opportunity for local scrutiny of the Partnership's work, the committee noted the report.

## **WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE - IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2019 – 2022**

**1061.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing it of the content of the West Partnership's Improvement Plan 2019 – 2022.

The Director explained that the plan was designed to build on the work undertaken by the Partnership through the 2018/19 plan that had been the subject of the previous agenda item and organised under the same 8 key areas as set out in the 2018/19 plan each of which was sponsored by a Director of Education/Chief Education Officer. She went on to explain that the plan captured those areas where collaboration between partners would be beneficial but emphasised that not all schools would participate in all activities. The plan set out the Partnership's offer to schools based on what stakeholders had indicated they would benefit from. The plan did not replicate or duplicate the individual local improvement plans of each partner authority but enhanced each authority's own efforts to support and challenge schools to improve.

She concluded by explaining that the report had been considered and endorsed by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 27 August and submitted to Education Scotland by the due date of 2 September.

Mr Morris welcomed reference in the report to professional learning and sought clarification on the concept of establishing learning sets across the region. In response the Director explained that the concept envisaged small groups of teachers coming together to solve common problems and as a result building professional trust in each other.

Councillor Wallace welcomed that the fear of loss of local control which had been raised when the concept of regional collaboratives had first been mooted by the Scottish Government had proven to be unfounded in practice. In response the Director stated that it was clear that local governance arrangements continued as before but that closer partnership working was enhancing the excellent work already in place across the authority. She also reported that a new partnership arrangement between the department and South Lanarkshire College would further broaden opportunities for pupils in East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report which built on the successes already achieved through the sharing of best practice across the collaborative.

Councillor O’Kane expressed the view that the committee had been fully justified in expressing its concerns regarding possible loss of local control when the concept of regional collaboratives had first been suggested, but welcomed the fact that these fears had proved to be unfounded. He concluded by commending the Director of Education for the considerable work she carried out as Regional Lead Officer for Education within the West Partnership.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

## **IMPROVING OUTCOMES THROUGH THE PUPIL EQUITY FUNDING**

**1062.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the progress made by schools during 2018/19 in improving outcomes through their use of Pupil Equity Funding, and the interventions used and good practice developed by schools to improve excellence and equity and achieve positive outcomes for all children and young people.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that additional funding, the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF), had been allocated until 2021 by the Scottish Government directly to schools and was targeted at closing the poverty related attainment gap as part of the Scottish Attainment Challenge designed to achieve equity in education. In 2017/18 and 2018/19 schools were allocated £1200 per pupil eligible and registered for free school meals with East Renfrewshire schools being allocated £1.14 million in 2018/19 rising to £1.43 million in 2019/20. Head Teachers had been supported to develop PEF plans detailing how these resources would be used to provide targeted interventions in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. In developing these plans it was important that Head Teachers clearly identified their attainment gap, drew on research evidence of what was known to be effective, and ensured collaboration with key stakeholders including pupils, parents and trade union colleagues.

He went on to explain that it was important to recognise that some of the strategies used to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, for example developments in learning and teaching, had resulted in gains for all pupils. Head Teachers had used the additional funding in a variety of different ways to support learners and a summary of the approaches was outlined in Appendix 2 to the report. He concluded by explaining that, as part of the conditions associated with the allocation of this additional funding, the Education Department was required to produce a report summarising the outcomes and performance that had been achieved at the authority level and a high level summary of the progress achieved by East Renfrewshire was contained in Appendix 2.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) then invited representatives of St John's Primary School and Barrhead High School to make a brief presentation to the committee on the progress made in their schools in improving outcomes for pupils through their use of PEF allocations.

Ms Crossan and Ms Kane explained that a wide range of interventions had been adopted within St John's Primary School including, amongst others, the funding of a family wellbeing worker, increased use of outdoor learning, a focus on attendance and latecoming, and the establishment of a "kit bag" club aimed at increasing pupils' physical and mental wellbeing. A range of statistics illustrating the improvements that had been achieved was shared with the committee.

Mr Sinclair and Ms Morrison continued by explaining the interventions which had been introduced at Barrhead High School including, amongst others, the creation of 3 principal teacher graded posts centred around the themes of digital literacy, pupil voice, and achievement. A number of examples of the progress that had been achieved were explained with particular emphasis on the establishment of a Friday Club which enabled pupils and staff to come together to participate in non-academic activities designed to increase confidence and improve physical and mental wellbeing.

A number of members commended the school staff for an interesting and uplifting presentation and congratulated them on achieving some impressive results through a wide range of innovative interventions. Many also emphasised the importance of communication and engagement between staff, parents and young people in reducing the attainment gap and also in enhancing the social and emotional skills of young people.

The Director of Education highlighted the positive impact of the use of PEF on the so-called "soft" measures and expressed the view that categorisation of East Renfrewshire schools as "exam factories" was extremely unfair on both staff and young people, reiterating the holistic approach to education in all its forms taken by the Council and the department.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane commend the excellent work by schools in using the additional resources provided through the PEF to target the poverty related attainment gap and thank the staff members present for an excellent and informative presentation, the committee noted the report as a summary of the progress made by schools in improving outcomes through the PEF during session 2018/19.

CHAIR