

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 14 June 2018.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Jim McLean
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Danny Devlin	Mr Des Morris
Councillor Alan Lafferty	

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); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager; and Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager.

**Apology:**

Dr Frank Angell.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

**REVISED STANDARD CIRCULAR 12 - INCLUSION**

**461.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update in relation to the department’s approach to inclusion and seeking approval for a revised policy (Standard Circular 12).

Having outlined the background to the department’s approach, the report explained that with national guidance supporting a presumption of mainstream schooling for all children, the department had reflected upon progress and achievement in this area in order to improve further and continue to support the central aim of promoting inclusion in all schools and in the work of all of its services.

The report explained that the revised Standard Circular, a copy of which accompanied the report, took account of all current legislation. However it recognised that this was not what delivered inclusion and the circular contained 4 key principles which underpinned the strategic vision of inclusion and which could be used to measure whether or not an inclusive education was being delivered for East Renfrewshire pupils.

Details of the 4 key principles having been summarised, the report explained that the guidance would provide clear and consistent advice on ensuring children and young people were accessing high quality learning and teaching that supported their needs. Furthermore, school staff were supported to be innovative, creative and solution focussed when meeting the needs of all learners.

The report further explained that to support the implementation of the policy a comprehensive Career Long Professional Learning programme had been developed, the delivery of which would be supported by the Quality Improvement Team in partnership with Educational Psychology.

In response to questions from Ms McIntyre and Councillor Swift, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) referred to the quality of existing staff, confirmed that the terms of the revised circular would be delivered within the available financial envelope, and that there were no reductions in the numbers of pupil support assistants (ASN) supporting those children with additional needs.

In response to further questions from Councillor Bamforth, she confirmed that parents could request an assessment for a Co-ordinated Support Plan although defined criteria needed to be met before an assessment would be carried out. She further confirmed that there were a number of Additional Support Needs Parents Forums in operation across East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Merrick sought clarification of whether or not any collaborative work in respect of additional support needs was taking place in response to which it was explained that although additional support needs did not feature in the West Partnership Regional Plan, officers from authorities in the partnership area did meet to discuss collaborative opportunities, where it was seen to enhance practice in a local authority.

Councillor Buchanan having been heard on how inclusion was a key aspect of Getting it Right for Every Child and to the preventative nature of the approach, and Councillor O’Kane on the funding decisions taken by the Council, the committee:-

- (a) approved Standard Circular 12; and
- (b) instructed the Director of Education to take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early years settings.

## **EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**

**462.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare services, and outlining the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

The report referred to the contribution made by Early Learning and Childcare services to the Single Outcome Agreement and to the continuing focus on early years by both national and local government. In particular the report referred to the publication in 2016 of *A Blueprint for*

*2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland*, which along with a subsequent report and action plan outlined the elements required to deliver the planned expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) almost doubling provision from 600 hours to 1,140 hours by 2020.

Having highlighted the importance placed on the provision of high quality ELC as demonstrated in the department's ELC Strategy and the 2016 departmental paper *Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire* the report provided detailed statistical information in relation to both the quality of provision, improving outcomes for children and the quality of the early years workforce, as well as setting out the next steps in each area.

In addition, the report provided information on the work being taken forward to maximise flexibility for parents in choosing their ELC provision and to ensure accessibility to services across the entire East Renfrewshire area, referring to the decision taken by the Council to reduce by 50% from August 2017 the hourly cost of wraparound care.

Councillor Swift having welcomed the report and referred to the increasing demand for extended care and to the financial challenges of meeting this demand, Councillor Bamforth sought clarification of the information relating to inspection grades. In reply the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) acknowledged that the information provided was possibly not as clear as it could have been but that the intention was to demonstrate that overall inspection grades achieved by both council and partner provider establishments were improving year on year.

Mr Morris welcomed that the report highlighted the quality of the Early Years workforce and the Council's continuing commitment to provide qualified teachers for children.

In the course of further discussion around service demand and flexibility, the Director of Education confirmed that there was an increased demand for extended provision and that it needed to be recognised that this was driven significantly by the personal economic circumstances of parents.

Councillor Buchanan having welcomed the report and highlighted that it showed the Council and partners continued to deliver quality services in the face of increasing demand, the committee noted the report.

## **REVISED STANDARD CIRCULAR 8 – INCLUDED, ENGAGED AND INVOLVED**

**463.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for a revised policy in relation to managing school exclusion (Standard Circular 8).

Having referred to the publication by the Scottish Government in June 2017 of new national guidance on managing school exclusions, the report explained that the revised policy, a copy of which accompanied the report, updated and refreshed the previous policy statement and included a refreshed focus on prevention, early intervention and response to individual need in line with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

It was further highlighted that schools and early learning and childcare settings already placed a greater importance on inclusion, setting out how this was achieved, and that this was reflected in exclusion rates in East Renfrewshire educational establishments which continued to remain low and compared very favourably against the national rate.

Having heard Mr Morris welcome that in terms of the circular teachers should be kept informed of correspondence or correspondence relating to police enquiries in relation to serious offences committed by pupils, the committee approved the revised Standard Circular 8 and instructed the Director of Education to take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early learning and childcare settings.

## **LEADERSHIP STRATEGY**

**464.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval of a Leadership Strategy.

The report referred to the Education Department's ambition to provide excellent schools and Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings to ensure all learners had the skills, capabilities and motivation to reach their aspirations and fulfil their potential, and to a variety of Scottish Government plans that underpinned the department's work to achieve excellence in schools/ELC settings and raise the bar for all learners.

It explained that in line with the outcomes set out in various Scottish Government documents the department recognised that a major challenge was how to ensure East Renfrewshire schools and centres stayed ambitious and built on what had already been accomplished in a way that could achieve greater equity for all learners.

The report explained that to achieve this it was important to develop and build capacity in leaders at every level, a key part of this process being the production of a Leadership Strategy.

The strategy, a copy of which accompanied the report, proposed a move beyond the traditional view of succession planning as a risk management strategy to mitigate the loss of leaders from the organisation, developing a different notion for succession planning, the details of which were outlined.

The report further explained that the strategy proposed an ambitious approach to leadership, reflective of contemporary thinking and informed by outcomes from educational initiatives that recognised distributive leadership (bottom up) rather than distributed leadership as pivotal to creating "great" establishments and delivering excellent experiences for all.

Having set out the 6 key aims of the strategy, the report explained that critical indicators and outcomes were set out in the strategy and would measure the impact of activities to be undertaken in its delivery. Furthermore, it was explained that school and departmental annual Standards and Quality reports would include details of progress in meeting the priorities of the National Improvement Framework, of the steps taken to develop distributive leadership at all levels and the impact of career long professional learning in the classroom. It was noted that annual reports to committee and Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate reports would provide further evidence of progress in implementing the actions set out in the strategy.

In response to questions from Councillor Bamforth the Education Senior Manager provided further information in respect of student retrieval placements, following which Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report which he stated would help to keep East Renfrewshire at the forefront of delivering quality opportunities and outcomes for children.

The committee approved the Leadership Strategy and instructed the Director of Education to bring reports to future meetings of the committee on the impact of its implementation.

## REVISED STANDARD CIRCULAR 57 – CHILD PROTECTION

**465.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for a revised policy in relation to the department's guidance to staff on child protection (Standard Circular 57).

Having referred to the publication by the Scottish Government in 2014 of revised guidelines on child protection to reflect the changed landscape in this field, and to the subsequent publication in 2017 of the *West of Scotland Child Protection Procedures* the report explained that the revised circular, a copy of which accompanied the report, set out guidance for staff working in education settings. Details of those areas on which the circular provided advice and guidance were outlined.

Councillor O'Kane having referred to the importance of raising awareness of the need to keep children safe, the committee approved the revised Standard Circular 57 and instructed the Director of Education to take appropriate steps to ensure its implementation in all schools and early learning and childcare settings, following consultation with the East Renfrewshire Child Protection Committee.

## EARLY LEARNING AND CHILCARE EXPANSION - PROGRESS

**466.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the progress of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement to 1140 hours per year for every 3 and four year old child, and every eligible 2 year old child, by August 2020.

By way of background, the report referred to the Scottish Government's vision to expand ELC provision as outlined above, to be underpinned by the key principles of Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability. It explained the steps that had been taken locally to deliver the vision including the establishment of an ELC Expansion Board which reported to the Council's Corporate Management Team, the Board having 4 workstreams with specific remits; Quality, Workforce, Expansion Plan and Service Models, and Provision and Resources

The report also referred to the requirement for local authorities to submit their implementation plans to the Scottish Government by 29 September 2017 the East Renfrewshire Implementation Plan having been approved by the committee on 28 September.

Thereafter, the report summarised progress across the 4 workstreams and proposed plans moving forward. With particular regard to the Provision and Resources workstream, it was explained that East Renfrewshire Council had been awarded £12.27 million (capital) over the period 2017/18 to 2020/21 with annual recurring revenue funding of £6.862 million from 2021/22. This was in addition to annual allocations for the period 2018/19 to 2020/21 to support phased introduction of the expanded service and the development and expansion of the workforce. It was noted that the revenue funding fell short of the £7,916,954 that had been identified as revenue costs for full implementation of the Council's proposals.

The report also referred to the Council's Capital Plan approved in March 2018, to the investment of ELC expansion agreed at that time based on estimated funding, and that the plan, taking account of the actual levels of Scottish Government funding, was being revised. Details of the proposed new build and extensions that could take place on the basis of the available funding were outlined.

The report also provided an analysis of the implications of the shortfall in revenue funding of £1,587,573 for full implementation, it being noted that the populations and uptake of childcare assumptions used by the Scottish Government did not properly reflect the position in East Renfrewshire for calculating revenue funding levels. It was noted that revenue funding levels were to be the subject of annual review to provide reassurance that funding levels were adequate, taking account of both total population and 2 year-old uptake. Details of 8 feasible options to help meet the impact of reduced revenue were outlined in the report, along with 7 scenarios that could meet all or part of the revenue funding gap, it being noted that in only 2 of the 7 scenarios would quality of provision be unaffected whilst flexibility and choice would also be affected in some cases.

Full discussion took place in the course of which Mr Morris highlighted that this report like the earlier ELC annual report emphasised the quality of the workforce and that he supported all steps to achieve the full staff complement to deliver the Council's preferred option.

Councillor Swift was heard on the demonstrable improvements in literacy and numeracy amongst children, to the increasing demands for service provision by parents, and expressed concern that with the levels of the additional Scottish Government revenue funding being provided there may be a need to dilute the quality and flexibility of the service on offer.

In response the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources) explained that in negotiations with the Scottish Government, the focus had been on service delivery up to 2020. However the report recognised that there would be increasing demand beyond that date and that and proposals for this could be brought back to the committee for consideration at an appropriate time.

Councillor Swift having commented further on the increasing pressures being placed on local authorities by the Scottish Government to deliver services but without the provision of adequate funding to do this, Councillor O'Kane highlighted that there was no disagreement on the principles of delivering increased childcare; that the funding challenges were recognised; that a number of other authorities with similar demographics were facing the same challenge; and there were opportunities to work collaboratively with these authorities to make the case for increased funding to the Scottish Government.

Councillor Buchanan was also heard on universal support to extend the available hours and confirmed that he would continue to make the case for increased funding at every opportunity.

Councillor Merrick having welcomed the key "grow our own" strategy of the Workforce workstream, Councillor O'Kane highlighted that the scale of the challenge was such that whilst this would go some way to addressing the issue, other collaborative working with partners in the Further Education sector would also be required.

The committee:-

- (a) noted progress in relation to the expansion planning for 1140 hours of free ELC for August 2020; and
- (b) noted the position on funding allocated and its impact;
  - (i) noting that a paper on the 8-Year Capital plan would be taken forward by the Chief Financial Officer which would include consideration of Early Years;

- (ii) the possible implications of receiving less revenue for full implementation (2021/22) of the Council's preferred delivery model; and
- (iii) ask that officers and Elected Members continue to take steps to lobby the Scottish Government and COSLA to understand the impact of this funding on East Renfrewshire, its children and families.

CHAIR

