

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

**Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 22 April 2021.**

**Present:**

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)  
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)  
Councillor Caroline Bamforth  
Councillor Charlie Gilbert  
Councillor Alan Lafferty  
Councillor Gordon Wallace

Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)  
Ms Dorothy Graham  
Ms Mary McIntyre  
Mr Des Morris

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

**Attending:**

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); Leanne Knox, Business Support Supervisor; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Dr Frank Angell.

**Also Attending:**

Shirley Gibson, Depute Head Teacher, Williamwood High School; Anthony Hutcheson, Head Teacher, St Mark’s Primary School.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1616.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT ON GETTING IT RIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD IN EAST RENFREWSHIRE**

**1617.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising on how Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) was embedded within East Renfrewshire Schools.

By way of background, the report explained that GIRFEC was a National Policy Framework established by the Scottish Government, which aimed to improve outcomes and support the wellbeing of children and young people by offering the right help at the right time from the right people. GIRFEC assisted in addressing issues of poverty experienced by families and the associated attainment gap. It also promoted partnership working to ensure greater equality for children and young people within the council's settings and schools.

GIRFEC was underpinned by 5 key principles to ensure that policy around children and young people was: child focused with children and their families at the centre of decision making with support available to them; centred around the wellbeing of children and young people within communities; based on identifying and addressing needs (including developmental needs) early to ensure the right support was implemented and later difficulties avoided; focused on joined-up working with services working in a coordinated way alongside families to meet needs and improve wellbeing; and focused on intervention approaches based on clearly planned outcomes.

GIRFEC had been embedded in East Renfrewshire Council's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools for a number of years. The Council's aim was to ensure that all children in East Renfrewshire were safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. Through consideration of those 8 wellbeing indicators, consistent language was used by children, young people, staff and partners to work collaboratively to ensure the collective assessment of needs, risks and strengths of a child and ensure good decision making and planning.

A staged approach was in place which took account of the National Practice Model where the wellbeing indicators, Resilience Matrix and My World Triangle were all used to gather information, analyse, plan and review to meet the needs of the child or young person concerned. This process was supported by the Council's Educational Psychology team and partner agencies to ensure all necessary supports were in place for each individual child.

Progress was tracked against targets outlined in Wellbeing Plans and Coordinated Support Plans within individual settings and attainment, achievement, attendance, exclusion rates and leaver destinations were tracked for all pupils. Details were also provided in the report of actions taken in terms of children and young people with additional support needs, support provided in terms of transitions between settings and the self-evaluation process carried out using questionnaires completed by children and young people.

The Children and Young People's Plan for 2020-2023 placed GIRFEC at the heart of its vision. with details being provided of the partnership working that took place to provide essential services to meet that aim, including work with CAMHS, Children 1<sup>st</sup>, Educational Psychology, Social Work, RAMH and School Nursing through the Healthier Minds Service, which offered support for the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Details of other partnership work ongoing were provided in the report.

Information was also provided on the comprehensive Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) programme which aimed to build capacity among staff to ensure that they could meet identified needs and ensure they are getting it right for every child.

The committee also received presentations from Shirley Gibson, Depute Head Teacher, Willamwood High School and Anthony Hutcheson, Head Teacher, St Mark's Primary School respectively on the implementation of GIRFEC within their own establishments.

In the course of the presentations it was explained that priorities for implementation of GIRFEC in the school setting relied on building capacity of both pupils and staff, with particular attention toward the health and wellbeing of both groups. Both establishments had a strong ethos of nurture and support and had embedded GIRFEC priorities into all aspects of planning and delivery. A range of support, both group and individual based, as well as a wide variety of teacher training opportunities and supports were available. These resources, combined with targeted interventions for identified needs had made an extremely positive impact on all factors identified in GIRFEC.

A strong emphasis on partnership working was identified, and it was clearly stated that the achievements of individual establishments were not achieved in isolation. In particular, the work of the Education Department, its Healthier Minds Service, and Children 1st were highlighted as important contributors across a range of factors, in enabling establishments to respond effectively to challenges and to provide supports that were useful for individual children and young people rather than adopting a “one size fits all” approach. Furthermore, this joined-up approach allowed best practice to be replicated across other establishments in the context of their own provision and the particular needs of the children and young people engaged with those establishments.

Councillor O’Kane, on behalf of the committee, thanked Mrs Gibson and Mr Hutcheson for their presentations as well as the excellent work they had carried out in helping to Get it Right for Every Child in East Renfrewshire.

Councillor Buchanan asked that the information provided in the presentations provided could be shared more widely to allow the wide range of achievements of East Renfrewshire’s children and young people, supported by educational establishments and partners, be more widely recognised and appreciated.

In response to a question from Councillor Wallace, Mrs Gibson and the director indicated that the statistics in terms of children feeling safe at school were gathered through very carefully worded questionnaires, which explicitly explained to each individual completing it, what was meant by the term “safe”, for example. It was stressed that any child or young person who had indicated that they did not feel safe at school was immediately contacted before leaving school, in order to establish any interventions or supports that were required and to ensure that they were implemented with the utmost urgency. However, the majority of those who had indicated not feeling safe were due to very specific, personal circumstances rather than any issue within the school itself.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD**

**1618.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the outcome of the most recent Customer Service Excellence assessment of the Education Department.

By way of background, the Customer Service Excellence standard tested in great depth those areas that research had indicated were a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There was also an emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user’s experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction. The previous review of the Education Department had taken place in November 2019 and was carried out on an annual basis.

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, the assessor had undertaken the review online and reviewed a wide range of documentary evidence as well as reviewing practice and interviewing staff, partners and customers. The two-stage process of the review was detailed in the report.

The review had concluded that the Customer Service Excellence standard would continue to be awarded to the Education Department. The full assessment report, which recognised the department's continuing commitment to providing excellent services and seeking continuous improvement, was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. It also highlighted 31 areas of 'Compliance Plus', where the Education Department had exceeded the requirements and were viewed as exemplary. This represented an increase from 26 in the 2019 assessment.

One area for improvement was highlighted, in relation to communication between the Education Department, other providers such as colleges, and young people. This would be taken forward by the vocational learning team.

Councillor O'Kane, followed by Councillor Buchanan, commended the strong performance outlined in the report and particularly welcomed the 31 areas of Compliance Plus which showed that the Education Department was engaged in continuous improvement and not being complacent on performance.

In response to a question from Councillor Wallace, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) stated that while the number of vocational courses on offer had reduced initially as a result of lockdown and the closure of colleges, the numbers had subsequently returned to normal and, in fact, increased from the previous number on offer.

Thereafter, the committee:

- (a) noted the continuing high standard of the award in recognition of the Education Department's high quality services; and
- (b) approved the approach to ensuring the Education Department's sustained commitment to continuous improvement.

## **WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE – INTERIM ACTION PLAN – JANUARY 2021**

**1619.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 1 October 2020 (Page 1293, Item 1389 refers), when the committee had noted the progress of the West Partnership and the content of its Improvement Plan, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the contents of the West Partnership's Interim Action Plan, a copy of which accompanied the report.

The Improvement Plan 2020-2023 set out the key areas for collaborative action to bring about improvement across the Glasgow City Region, capturing those areas where collaboration between partners would be beneficial. In recognition of the impact of COVID-19, a major aim of the plan was to address both recovery and renewal.

In January 2021, the Interim Action Plan was drawn up at the request of directors to address the challenges of the ongoing pandemic. In particular, the challenges of delivering a meaningful education provision while most children and young people were unable to attend school. Based on the West Partnership's Plan 2020 to 2023, the Interim Action Plan identified 7 priority projects, each of which had specific relevance during the COVID-19 restrictions. Those included: important and heavily subscribed leadership activities; supporting learners with additional needs; tracking learners' wellbeing; and significant contribution to the national

digital learning offer, West OS. The Interim Action Plan had been endorsed by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 2 March 2021 and it was recommended that each Council area considered the report through its own local governance arrangements.

It was noted in the report that the Scottish Government had invited bids to support the implementation of each Improvement Plan and the West Partnership had secured funding of £1,339,000.

Councillor O’Kane, on behalf of the committee, thanked the director for a comprehensive report.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

CHAIR

