

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of virtual meeting held at 10.00am on 30 September 2021.

Present:

Councillor Alan Lafferty (Chair)	Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader)	Dr Frank Angell
Provost Jim Fletcher	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Mrs Mary McIntyre

Councillor Lafferty in the Chair

Attending:

Mark Ratter, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement); Joe McCaig, Head of Education Services (Performance and Provision); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager (Developing People); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); David Gordon, Quality Improvement Officer; Aimee Glen, Senior Business Support Assistant; Colin Hutton, Senior Communications Officer; John Burke, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Jim McLean and Mr Des Morris.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1770. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

GET INTO SUMMER

1771. Councillor Lafferty invited Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement), to give an oral report on the “Get Into Summer” programme that had run over the school summer break. The report was accompanied by a brief video presentation in which children and young people, as well as education, and other staff who supported the programme, gave their view on the programme and offered an insight into the range of activities and events offered.

It was explained that “Get Into Summer” had been set up using dedicated, one-off funding from the Scottish Government to help families deal with isolation during lockdown and allow children and young people to stay active out of school. 2,200 children and young people had benefitted from the programme, as well as their families and as the activities were run during

the day, it also provided an element of childcare for families and lunch entitlement for the children and young people. It was also noted that play kit bags had been provided to participating families containing toys and equipment that encouraged active play in an outdoor environment.

In summary, both the children and young people and the staff involved stated that the programme had been excellent and worthwhile, particularly in supporting those who had struggled during lockdown. Many children in particular noted the benefits of not only socialising with people they knew, but also making new friends through the programme's activities.

Councillor Lafferty was impressed by the variety of the activities and events offered, and was pleased to see that the response of the children and young people had been overwhelmingly positive. He led the committee in thanking those involved in running such a successful and worthwhile programme.

Councillor Wallace enquired as to the possibility of expanding and developing the programme still further, seeking clarity on the nature of the funding. He also asked if there was a possibility of linking such a programme with apprenticeship courses through partner colleges. In reply, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) clarified that, while there was an ongoing summer activity programme run by the Trust, "Get Into Summer" had been a one-off event. The Director further clarified that if additional funding was provided in future years, the scope of the programme could be expanded, particularly with a longer notice period to prepare activities.

Councillor Merrick also added his appreciation for the work of staff in delivering such a successful programme, stating that it was excellent to see the children and young people enjoying themselves after what had been such a difficult year for them.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

PROGRESS REPORT ON PRIORITIES ASSOCIATED WITH NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK

1772. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the Education Department's progress in implementing priorities associated with the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education (NIF).

By way of background, the report explained that on 6 January 2016, the Scottish Government had launched the NIF to drive both excellence and equity in Scottish education. The framework was reviewed annually with the 2021 NIF and associated Improvement Plan published in December 2020.

The NIF contained 4 national priorities, these being noted as: improvement in attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy; closing the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged children and young people; improvement in children and young people's health and wellbeing; and improvement in employability skills and sustained, positive school-leaver destinations for all young people. These mirrored the Council's own aspirations. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) explained that, given the COVID-19 situation, local authorities had not been required to report to the Scottish Government on progress in delivering on the priorities. However, the Education Department had been able to evaluate its progress in order to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

In conclusion, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) stated that there had been a relentless focus by the Education Department and schools to raise the bar for all learners and, at the same time, reduce inequalities of outcome experienced by more disadvantaged children and young people. This work continued despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic had been far reaching and there would be a continued need to focus resources on reducing the inequalities that would arise as a result of it to ensure that a meaningful, long term recovery could take place. The implementation of the NIF priorities would continue to be monitored, with progress reported to the committee on an annual basis.

Councillor Bamforth thanked all of the staff involved for producing such a detailed report in very challenging circumstances. However, she sought some clarity on the oral language development programme. The reported outcomes had been excellent and Councillor Bamforth asked if this programme would be continued. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) clarified that the programme had been developed by 2 specialist teachers who had been employed to establish the skills required and build the capacity to run similar programmes across the teaching establishment. That work would allow teachers to make targeted programmes available to children and young people where they felt it was beneficial and necessary, without additional support.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification on the role of “moderation facilitators” and the evidence base for establishing that children and young people leaving school had progressed to positive destinations. In reply, the Head of Education (Quality Improvement) explained that the moderation facilitators were teachers and members of staff who supported teachers in ensuring their judgements in terms of Curriculum for Excellence were consistent and accurate across all schools. In terms of the evidence for positive destination statistics, the National Participation Measure statistics gave the most accurate reflection of outcomes for school leavers in this regard, with East Renfrewshire showing as having the highest number of school leavers moving on to positive destinations. She reflected on the role of partnership working in that achievement, particularly highlighting the role of Skills Development Scotland.

Provost Fletcher expressed some concerns around the quality of materials he had seen from another local authority provided to children and their families for the purposes of home schooling. In particular, he expressed concern about numeracy and literacy teaching during the pandemic. The Head of Education (Quality Improvement) pointed out that the quality of the remote learning programme offered by East Renfrewshire, and the associated materials provided to families, had been widely praised and it had been audited by schools in partnership with the Quality Improvement Team and externally by Education Scotland. However, it was accepted that this was no substitute for classroom learning. Formative assessments being carried out in schools would establish any areas where children and young people required additional support during the return to classroom learning and resources would be targeted appropriately. It was also noted that Pupil Equity Funding would target resources toward those children most in need of assistance.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION REPORT 2020-2021

1773. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the evaluation of work undertaken by the West Partnership (Glasgow Region Education Improvement Collaborative) in 2020-2021.

The Evaluation Report, a copy of which accompanied the report, captured the progress of the three main West Partnership workstreams, these being leadership, empowerment and

improvement; curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment; and collaborative learning networks. It also included good examples of how partnership working across the region was supporting local authorities in delivering high quality education to children and young people.

The West Online School resource was highlighted as one particular example of the benefits of the collaborative approach. All schools in East Renfrewshire had made use of the extensive library of learning videos to support both practitioners and learners. Furthermore, senior leaders in East Renfrewshire had attended Virtual Learning Networks which provided a space for senior leaders to effectively collaborate to formulate effective pandemic response strategies.

The Evaluation Report had been approved by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 24 August 2021 and, once considered by this committee and others across the region, would be enhanced by the addition of pictures and graphics and published.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification on the meaning of the term “authentic empowerment” in response to which the Director explained that the aim was to ensure that all staff were supported, at all levels, to make appropriate autonomous decisions with accountability.

Mrs McIntyre stated that she was very impressed with the report. While, initially, she had not been convinced by the notion of the West Partnership, the benefits of the approach were clear to see and she extended her congratulations to all involved. Provost Fletcher and Councillor Lafferty then spoke in support of this view, thanking all staff for their commitment and hard work to ensure the collaborative approach had been a success.

Councillor Buchanan welcomed the report and commended the West Partnership as being of huge benefit to all 8 member authorities. Significant improvements had been registered across all areas and he felt this was due to the sharing of best practice across the region.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

WEST PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-2022

1774. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 22 April 2021 (Page 1506, Item 1619 refers), when the committee had noted progress of the West Partnership and its interim Action Plan, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education on the West Partnership’s Improvement Plan 2021-2022, a copy of which accompanied the report.

The West Partnership was required to produce an annual improvement plan outlining the vision, purpose and key activities for the year ahead. The committee was reminded that, while the plan was wide ranging, not all schools or local authorities would participate in all activities and would be able to select those which they felt would be of benefit to them.

Three main workstreams had been identified to support and add value to the work of authorities: wellbeing for learning; leadership, empowerment and improvement; and curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment. The West Partnership was committed to working with all its partners to achieve the key objectives set out under each workstream.

It was noted that a revised “Plan on a Page” had been included, which attempted to articulate the vision, values, purpose and priorities of the West Partnership.

The paper had been considered and endorsed by the Glasgow City Region Education Committee on 24 August 2021.

Councillor Wallace indicated that the critical indicators shown in the report highlighted the success of the collaborative approach. However, he enquired as to why targets had been reduced in some measures. In reply, the Director indicated that the targets had initially been set at the beginning of the 3 year planning period and hadn't taken account of progress being made in those particular areas. Those targets would be revised in the coming planning period. Councillor Wallace then asked a further question regarding the dialogue that had taken place in terms of wellbeing for learning and how this could be affected in the context of discussions around the National Care Service. The Director stated that the issue had not been raised at meetings of the West Partnership in order for a view on the matter to be resolved. He clarified that the Wellbeing for Learning workstream was focussed on supporting staff and young people in schools. Since the work of the Partnership was more at an operational level, there had been no specific actions put in place regarding that specific issue.

Thereafter, the committee agreed to note the report.

CHAIR

