

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 17 August 2023.

Present:

Councillor Andrew Anderson (Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan
Councillor Kate Campbell
Councillor Colm Merrick
Councillor Owen O'Donnell (Leader)

Councillor Katie Pragnell (Vice Chair)
Ms Fiona Gilchrist
Ms Dorothy Graham
Mr Des Morris
Ms Evelyn Yedd

Councillor Anderson 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); Siobhan McColgan, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Graeme Hay, Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); Arlene Cassidy, Children's Services Strategy Manager; Colin Wright, Committee Services Officer; and Liona Allison, Assistant Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillors Danny Devlin and Gordon Wallace.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

532. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

TRIBUTE TO COMMITTEE MEMBER DR FRANK ANGELL.

533. Prior to the commencement of business, the Chair paid tribute to Dr Frank Angell, who sadly passed away recently. Dr Angell had made a considerable contribution to the Committee and his enthusiasm for education and lifelong learning was apparent for all to see. Contributions were invited from Members and a number of comments were made with Members expressing their gratitude and appreciation for the valuable work he had achieved with the Committee. All agreed that his likeable personality would be sadly missed as a friend and a valuable Committee Member who had left an outstanding legacy in relation to education and lifelong learning in East Renfrewshire. Evelyn Yedd, who had replaced Dr Angell

intimated that the comments expressed by the Committee would provide some comfort to Dr Angell's relatives and they would be passed on accordingly.

Evelyn Yedd was welcomed to her first meeting of the Committee as the replacement for Dr Angell. She introduced herself as the paid Administrator for the Glasgow Jewish Council. She had come from an education background and had also previously been an employee of East Renfrewshire Council, in addition to working with previous Calderwood Lodge Head Teachers. She intimated that she would be honoured to serve the Education Committee and looked forward to working with Members.

SQA VERBAL UPDATE

534. The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement) provided a verbal update on the 2023 results for pupils throughout East Renfrewshire secondary schools. Once again, the examination result performance of the pupils had been outstanding. A detailed examination of the results would be available at a presentation to a future Committee, however information relating to a number of highlights were provided as follows:

- a) At National 5 in S4, the authority achieved its best ever performance with 82% of the cohort achieving 5 or more awards up from 78% in 2022. 95% of S4 pupils achieved 5 or more qualifications at National 4 or better, similar to the result last year.
- b) At Higher level, performance of S5 pupils were once again strong across all measures. 84% of the original roll achieved 1 or more Highers, 69% attained 3 or more Highers and 47% attained 5 or more Highers. This is the authority's best ever performance, excluding the Alternative Certification Model (ACM) and the generous approach applied to the 2022 exam diet.
- c) 61% of pupils presented for National 5, achieved A grades, an increase from pre-pandemic rates in 2019 of 54%.

Members praised the pupils, teachers and support staff involved for this achievement and expressed their thanks for their contribution in emphasising the culture of continuous improvement within schools in East Renfrewshire. The resilience shown by pupils was particularly impressive due to the pandemic and its effect on children's education. There was also mention of the attainment gap improvements, particularly relating to boys performance.

The information from the verbal update on the SQA examination performance was noted and pupils, teachers and support staff were congratulated by Members.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REPORT 2020-23

535. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing the Education Committee on the progress made in ensuring children's rights are respected and upheld within East Renfrewshire over the last 3 years. The report was also due to be considered at the next IJB meeting and would be submitted to the Scottish Government. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) summarised the report, drawing to the Committee's attention, the legislation requiring local authorities to protect children's rights, particularly Part 1, Section 2 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which places a duty on listed public authorities, including all local authorities and health boards, to report every 3 years on the steps they have taken in that period to improve children's rights.

During discussion, Members praised the report, acknowledging the progress in taking forward this matter. The general vision was also praised and thanks were expressed to the Education staff for their efforts, they also acknowledged the success of the partnership with HSCP and the partners who contributed to the writing of the report. It was suggested that it would be useful to include special needs information in the report in the future and in response, it was clarified that further case studies will be added to the online version, including special needs. In addition, the online link providing further details of these case studies will be shared.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed the following course of action:

- (a) note current practice within East Renfrewshire underpinning and ensuring children's rights;
- (b) approve the East Renfrewshire Children's Rights Report;
- (c) note the authority's key actions going forward to respect and uphold children's rights; and
- (d) To include case studies on special needs to the online version of the Rights Report and to share the online link to this.

EAST RENFREWSHIRE'S CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE PLAN 2023-26

536. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education detailing "At Our Heart – Next Steps" The East Renfrewshire Approach to Children Services Planning for the period 2023-2026. The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) expanded on the report. The Education Committee is requested to note the content of the plan prior to submission to the full Council on 13 September for approval. The plan was noted by IJB on 16th August. After Council consideration the approved plan would be submitted to the Scottish Government. A copy of the document, "At Our Heart – The Next Steps" The East Renfrewshire Approach to Children's Services Planning, was circulated with the report and Appendix 1 contained a document detailing the Profile of Children and Young People's Needs in East Renfrewshire, with Appendix 2 containing the Views and Experiences of the Children and Families of East Renfrewshire 2023-2026.

During discussion, Members praised the Education Department for the progress in recognising the importance of health and well-being for children, this would place the local authority in a strong position for the future. A question was asked as to when the Committee would be updated on the progress of the plan and it was intimated that there was currently no annual update, however, some of the information will be related through the IJB and the Head of Education Services assured the Committee that they would be kept informed of the progress on a regular basis.

A number of issues were raised by Councillor O'Donnell, including: how to effectively measure outcomes, how the report compared to previous versions, clarification over some of the definitions used and a suggestion that child poverty should be mentioned. Councillor O'Donnell reported that these issues would be addressed offline and shared with the Committee in due course.

In response, it was reported that progress is shared with committee in a number of ways for example through reports on GIRFEC, Healthier Minds and Children's Rights. Work is ongoing in relation to the measurement of outcomes and it was anticipated that smart targets would be established soon and this would be shared with the Committee in due course.

It was further stressed that the Council were currently working with their partners on a number of issues including child poverty. There was also a discussion on the importance of keeping siblings together within the same school and it was emphasised that this was always the aim of the Education Department, however families sometimes submitted placing requests for their children which impacted on the ability to keep siblings together; it was agreed that the legal aspect of this issue could be discussed at some point offline.

Following further discussion, the Committee agreed to:

- a) acknowledge the duties of the Children and Young People Act 2014 as they relate to Part 3 Children's Services Planning;
- b) note the content of the Children and Young People's Services Plan for 2023-2026, prior to submission to full Council for approval and;
- c) include SMART targets to the identified measures of success and progress of the plan to be shared with Members at some point in the future.

REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE RATE FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE FUNDED PROVISION

537. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education updating the Committee on the review of the sustainable rate for funded providers for provision of the Early Learning and Childcare statutory entitlement to 1,140 hours and seeking approval for the payment of the new rate from the beginning of the 2023/24 session. Further information on the proposed changes and the rate setting exercise was provided by the Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change). He stressed the importance of striking a balance between achieving sustainability for the providers and the financial implications for the Council. It was noted that, in seeking to set the new rate, the Education Department had engaged with funded providers through this process.

During discussion, Members praised the report, particularly for the engagement with providers and they further acknowledged the difficulties in achieving a good balance, particularly due to food inflation.

Following discussion, the following course of action was agreed:

- a) to note the review undertaken of the sustainable rate paid to Funded Providers within East Renfrewshire;
- b) to approve the increase in the sustainable hourly rate to £5.87;
- c) to approve the increase in the meal provision hourly rate to 57p; and
- d) to request that the Director of Education arrange for the backdating of the new rates to the beginning of the new session, starting from Monday 14th August 2023.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT END-YEAR REPORT 2022/23

538. The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the end-year report on the performance of the Education Department for 2022/23. Detailed figures containing the End of Year Performance Data were attached to the report as an Appendix. The Education Senior Manager (Leading Business Change); summarised the report drawing

attention to a number of issues, including the key activities and performance indicators contributing to the delivery of the Council's overall outcome delivery plan (ODP). It was emphasised that some of the information would be slightly out of sync with the academic year, as the information provided under the report from the SQA related to 2023 and would not be contained in this report.

During discussion, the issue of exclusion was raised, with some concern that the rates could be higher than reported. There had also been recent national media publicity relating to violent incidents within schools. It was emphasised that the Department had an updated policy, which supported staff and young people and East Renfrewshire had an effective mechanism in place to ensure all incidents were reported. During discussion, it was stressed that the effect of lockdown could also not be under-estimated. The importance of effective partnership working was also emphasised.

During discussion, Councillor O'Donnell requested clarification over a number of issues: including absence rates and follow up information on leaver destination. The points were clarified and following previous concern over the accuracy of the absence figures, it was confirmed that they were now accurate and up to date. Members were also encouraged to hear that information was available to capture the ongoing learning and monitoring of pupils to enable them to obtain a clearer picture of their progress after leaving school. Councillor Buchanan also clarified that the Scottish Government were currently involved in discussions over the future shape of Education, which would also include areas such as how qualifications will look in the future and measuring outcomes.

Following acknowledgement by the Committee of the ongoing progress, the Committee agreed to note the content of the report as a summary of the Education Department's performance for 2022/23.

CHAIR

