

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 23 January 2020.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Chair)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Colm Merrick (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon Wallace
Councillor Caroline Bamforth	Ms Dorothy Graham
Councillor Danny Devlin	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Mr Des Morris

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Janice Collins, Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources); Mark Ratter, Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance); Tracy Morton, Education Senior Manager; and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies:

Councillor Tony Buchanan (Leader) and Dr Frank Angell.

Also attending:

John Feeney, Facilities Management Cleaning and Janitorial Co-ordinator; Helen Armstrong; Karen Lawn; Agnieszka Liwinska; Tracey McBurnie; Charlotte Smith; and Agnes Whyte, Facilities Management Cleaning Team.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1161. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

PRESENTATION – FACILITIES MANAGEMENT TEAM

1162. Councillor O’Kane reported that the Education Department’s Facilities Management team, which included cleaning and janitorial services, had won the “Best Performer in Building Cleaning 2019” Award at the recent Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards.

The award recognised the best performers in the UK across frontline local government services on a range of cost and quality performance indicators promoting excellence and continuous improvement.

A number of representatives of the service were present and Councillor O'Kane presented them with a token of appreciation on behalf of the committee.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2018/19

1163. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the proposed content of the Education Department's draft 2018/19 Standards and Quality Report, a copy of which accompanied the report.

Having set out the legislative obligations on local authorities to produce and publish annually a Local Improvement Plan which detailed how schools and services would continuously improve, and based on this requirement prepare a Standards and Quality Report detailing how improvements in provision had been sought and achieved, the report outlined the progress made by the Education Department and its schools and services in taking forward the improvement agenda set out in the Local Improvement Plan 2018-2021. Following feedback, the format of the report had been designed to provide a more concise, visual and high level summary of the progress that had been made.

The report explained that the department had undertaken a self-evaluation exercise which had informed the draft report and helped outline the steps to be included in the Local Improvement Plan 2020-2023 which was the subject of a separate report to the committee (Item 1164 below refers). The draft Standards and Quality Report highlighted the very good and excellent standards and practice achieved by the department, its schools, and services, including details of some of the activities that had been undertaken during the 2018/19 school session and their impact on stakeholders. Following feedback, the format of the report had been designed to provide a concise, visual, and high-level summary of progress made with the Local Improvement Plan.

It was proposed to issue the report electronically to all parents with children attending East Renfrewshire schools or Early Learning and Childcare centres and it would be available to view online or download from the Council's website. A limited number of printed copies would be available in all libraries, education, sports and cultural centres, and Council buildings.

Responding to Councillor Wallace who sought clarification on the support available to the small percentage of leavers from East Renfrewshire schools who did not transition to a positive destination, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that the department continued to track and support these young people and worked with a range of partners including the Council's Employability Service to assist them into employment, training or further or higher education.

A number of members of the committee commended the department on an excellent and easily read report and on the decision to make it available primarily in digital format with a view to it reaching a wider audience. The success of pupils in a range of musical and sporting activities was also highlighted.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane reiterate that this was another excellent report which demonstrated the depth of activities provided in the Council's schools and highlighted the ethos of continuous improvement, and add his thanks to all staff in the department for their contribution to the overall success of East Renfrewshire's children and young people, the committee:-

- (a) approved the 2018/19 Standards and Quality Report; and
- (b) authorised the Director of Education to take the necessary steps to produce and issue copies of the report for stakeholders as outlined.

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020-2023

1164. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Education Department's Local Improvement Plan 2020-2023.

The report explained that the plan was designed to give an indication of the department's key areas for improvement over the next three years and was updated annually to take account of changing priorities. Areas of improvement were outlined and priorities would be developed through self-evaluation and information gathered through external evaluations and the implementation of the plan. The draft plan took account of the current national priority areas including the National Improvement Framework (NIF) and was informed by the East Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership's Community Plan, the Fairer East Ren Plan and Locality Plans, the department's contributions to the Council's Outcome Delivery Plan 2020-2023, and the department's strategy "*Advancing Excellence and Equity in Education in East Renfrewshire*". Cognisance had also been taken of the West Partnership Improvement Plan, which set out the areas that the eight local authorities in the partnership would collaborate on regionally to offer schools opportunities to improve.

The plan had a clear focus on improving outcomes for all learners, and in line with the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 also set out how the department would address the inequalities of outcomes that existed for different equity groups and how the priorities associated with the NIF would be achieved.

The timescale for the implementation of the plan was school sessions 2020-21 through to 2022-23 and the department would continue to report on the progress made with the plan through the annual Standards and Quality Report. The draft plan had been developed in time to allow education establishments to take account of the priorities as they developed their own improvement plans and working time agreements. It was intended to help and guide individual establishments to plan for improvement but not to prescribe what those improvements should be or how they should be taken forward.

Having heard the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) advise that the finalised plan would be submitted to the Scottish Government in due course as required under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000, the committee approved the Local Improvement Plan 2020-2023.

PROGRESS OF EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

1165. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 9 May 2019 (Page 831, Item 886 refers), when the committee had noted the progress by the department in preparing for the introduction of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare by August 2020, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing a further update and a summary of proposed plans moving forward to delivery.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) summarised the report highlighting a number of key issues including, amongst others, the continued focus and improvement in quality by all providers; the extensive Career-Long Professional Learning (CLPL) online programme available to all practitioners; the success of the Councils "Grow Our

Own” strategy in relation to the Early Years workforce; and the progress of the extensive early years infrastructure programme to deliver 6 new build or extended facilities for completion by August 2020. She concluded by explaining that whilst the Council was satisfied that it would be able to offer all parents their entitled 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, the level of flexibility currently offered would reduce and the opportunity to purchase wraparound care could become less likely. It was also explained that parents might not be given their choice of model thus potentially reducing the high level of satisfaction currently provided to parents across the 4 communities.

Responding to Councillor Bamforth who sought further clarification regarding the reduction in flexibility and wraparound care and the loss of trained graduate staff to other local authorities, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that it was anticipated that an ad-hoc wraparound care system could be developed but its availability was at present unknown until all placements had been offered and accepted by parents. With reference to the graduate workforce, she explained that the department had invested in striving towards a graduate workforce but that a number of graduates had taken advantage of the growth in early years learning and moved to promoted posts within other local authorities. This was further exacerbated by the lack of a national pay scale which allowed authorities to offer higher salaries than those on offer locally in order to attract and retain good quality trained staff.

Councillor Wallace sought clarification on how the anticipated shortfall in revenue funding from the Scottish Government to support the provision of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare would be met. In response, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the department’s hope was that the funding model would change back to one which reflected the increasing population numbers within East Renfrewshire. The Convener and director continued to lobby CoSLA to make the case to the Scottish Government for this change to be made. In the meantime any revenue shortfall would require to be met by the Council through its normal revenue budget process.

Councillor Merrick, whilst commending the director for an excellent report, expressed the view that the lack of wraparound care would have a disproportionate impact on single parent families. In response, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the Council prioritised support to those children who needed it most and that the Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) existed to support parents such as those referred to by Councillor Merrick.

Councillor O’Kane added his congratulations to the director for an excellent report which covered a wide-ranging body of work, and thanked all staff within the department for their efforts in bringing this major project to fruition. He also expressed satisfaction at seeing the tangible signs of the major infrastructure building works developing on a weekly basis and reiterated, as explained by the Head of Education Service (Equality and Equity) earlier, that he and the director took every opportunity to press the Scottish Government to change its funding model to recognize the increasing population in East Renfrewshire and the impact this would have on the Council’s finances in future years.

The committee agreed to note the progress made regarding East Renfrewshire’s expansion planning for 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare by August 2020.