

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 31 March 2016.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair),	Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Councillor Vincent Waters
Councillor Alan Lafferty	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Gordon McCaskill	Mr Alan Munro

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.

Also attending:

Joanne Scott, Head Teacher, Netherlee Primary School.

Apologies:

Councillors Elaine Green (Chair), Tony Buchanan, Charlie Gilbert, Ian McAlpine and Jim Swift; and Ms Mary McIntyre.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1983. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON NETHERLEE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY CLASS

1984. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing members of the report by Education Scotland following their inspection of Netherlee Primary School and Nursery Class. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) explained that in assessing the quality indicators in the school Education Scotland had found two aspects of the work to be excellent and one indicator had been judged to be very good. In the nursery class all three evaluations had been judged to be good. Two further whole school evaluations for the curriculum and improvement through self-evaluation had been judged to be very good and excellent respectively. Key strengths were highlighted, including articulate, confident, motivated children with high aspirations; the outstanding learning experiences of children and the development of their health and wellbeing; the effective involvement of parents in the life of the school; the outstanding approaches to monitor and improve the quality of learning and teaching; the very high and improving levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy; and the excellent leadership of the headteacher and shared leadership of the staff team. The inspection team had agreed with the school and the Education Department that the school and nursery class should continue to take forward the school's vision and ideas for improvement as planned. Given that the school had been judged to be excellent in three areas inspected by Education Scotland, there was no need for an additional action plan to address these issues. An action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement in the nursery class had been drawn up and the Quality Improvement Service (QIS) would work closely with the nursery class to support its implementation. The department would continue to work in partnership with the headteacher and staff to share the sector leading practices with other schools within East Renfrewshire.

Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Netherlee Primary School and Nursery Class and the Education Department recommended that the school be accredited for its achievements. This would mean that the authority would not carry out any formal quality assurance activities in Netherlee Primary School for a period of three years from the date of the report. The QIS would however revisit the nursery class within 18 months to review the impact of the improvement plan in addressing the areas highlighted for improvement and to provide a progress report to parents.

Members of the committee congratulated all those associated with this outstanding report which reflected well on staff, pupils, and the wider community, explaining that the school was at the heart of the local community. Some concern was however expressed that this excellent report could result in additional pressure on places at the school as a result of placing requests.

Ms Scott, Head Teacher, explained that everyone connected with the school and nursery class was delighted with the report; that the report represented the starting point for further improvement; thanked the committee for its support and positive comments; and commended the hard work of staff, pupils, parents, the wider community, the Education Department Directorate and the QIS.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane, on behalf of the committee, express thanks for a very good report and ask Ms Scott to convey the committee's comments to everyone involved in the school community, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the content of the Education Scotland report on Netherlee Primary School and Nursery Class;
- (b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from March 2016 to March 2019; and
- (c) approve the nursery's action plan to address the agreed area for improvement.

PARENTING STRATEGY ANNUAL REVIEW

1985. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 January 2013 (Page 370, Item 383 refers), when the committee had approved the draft Parenting Strategy, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on progress with the implementation of the strategy.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the report outlined the approaches taken to ensure that East Renfrewshire's children and young people grew up in nurturing homes and communities where the adults in their lives had a clear understanding of their needs and how to support these needs. She went on to remind the committee of the strategy's 4 clear objectives explaining how the strategy tied in to the East Renfrewshire Single Outcome Agreement and summarised the steps taken to date to implement the strategy. These included the Psychology of Parenting Project targeting preschool children across the authority; the scaling up of the Let's Play project designed to support parents to interact and play with their children to include the Dunterlie area; the Family Centred Accreditation award which recognised the efforts which nurseries go to in order to engage, involve and include parents; and a parenting programme in secondary schools which targeted senior pupils and allowed them to develop new skills which would support them as parents in the future.

The report concluded by outlining the next steps which the department planned to implement including, amongst others, working with the Council's Human Resources and Communications teams to promote the importance of a work/life balance to maximise employees' time for parenting; the formation of a Parenting Key Change steering group to drive forward the action plan derived from the Auchenback community engagement exercise; supporting Family First workers to engage with services to remove barriers identified by customers; and reviewing and aligning the department's Parental Involvement Strategy and Parenting Strategy to form an integrated Parental Engagement Strategy which took cognisance of the key messages from the Scottish Government's National Improvement Framework.

A number of members were heard in support of the report and congratulating the Education Department on its willingness to intervene as early as necessary in an attempt to break the cycle of problems caused by a lack of support for parents who were facing a number of pressures including joblessness; lack of suitable housing at an affordable cost; transport difficulties; substance abuse and poor health. The department was also congratulated on its approach to partnership working including across services and through collaboration with partner agencies and the 3rd Sector.

Having heard the Director of Education reiterate that the Parenting Strategy would be implemented in collaboration with the Early Years Strategy and very briefly outline some of the additional responsibilities which would fall to local authorities as a result of the full implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the committee:-

- (a) noted the report; and
- (b) approved the next steps as set out in the report.

PRE-5 EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT

1986. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education providing an update on the approaches taken to develop pre-5 education and childcare services and outlining the next steps to further improve the quality of provision and experiences of young children.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the report set out how the Council had implemented an element of flexibility for parents and children in accessing their entitlement to 600 hours of early learning and childcare per year; the areas to be included in the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy; how the Council had increased provision and capacity for children aged 0 – 5 years; details of the partnership arrangements with other services and agencies; and an update on workforce development.

A number of key achievements were highlighted including standardised opening hours of 8.00am to 6.00pm for all Council nurseries; the allocation of nursery places on a community basis; the opening of Cart Mill Family Centre to serve the communities of Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham; a proposed pilot with NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde to introduce a Language and Communication Friendly Award within all early years establishments; and the proposed introduction of Cross Border Payment arrangements with neighbouring authorities.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) concluded by explaining that the allocation process for session 2016/17 had begun and while the department was confident that it could offer a place within their community to all parents who requested it, some nurseries were still facing capacity pressures, particularly Mearns Nursery Class and Hazeldene Family Centre. Further information would be made available to members in the near future.

Responding to comments from members, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity), supported by the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources), explained that two private nurseries had not met the standard set by the department and consequently no formal relationship existed with those establishments for session 2016/17; that the contract for the permanent building at Cart Mill Family Centre had been awarded and work on site was due to start in late April with completion due towards the end of 2016; and that site clearance work had commenced on the site of the new Auchenback Hub. Referring to a question from Councillor Fletcher who asked if there was any indication that parental wishes in relation to the allocation of preschool places were being met, she explained that the Council had a duty to consult with parents every 2 years; that anecdotal evidence suggested that the Council was meeting parental expectations; and that it was hoped that this would be confirmed following the closure later that day of the most recent consultation exercise.

Responding to a comment from Mr Munro regarding the role of registered teachers in pre-5 establishments, the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the department was committed to having registered teachers in nurseries as part of a mixed-skill workforce. She went on to explain that the First Minister had recently expressed her wish to see a totally graduate workforce in this field and that the department was in ongoing correspondence with the Scottish Government in this regard but that it was not currently clear if additional funding would be made available to meet the cost of this proposed initiative.

The committee agreed to note the contents of the Pre-5 Education and Childcare Annual Report and approve the next steps as outlined.

DRAFT EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE STRATEGY 2016 – 2020

1987. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy.

The Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) explained that the Early Learning and Childcare Strategy had been devised to support the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and outlined a vision for Early Learning and Childcare within East Renfrewshire. The strategy complemented the existing East Renfrewshire Parenting Strategy and the Early Years Strategy as well as addressing a number of additional objectives. These included children and families having access to flexible services which provided their full entitlement to effective learning and childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds as well as eligible 2 year olds; children receiving high quality early learning and childcare; children and families being supported by a highly skilled workforce; early learning and childcare settings providing an increase in activities which supported prevention and early intervention, improved outcomes and reduced inequalities; and providing children and families with access to Out of School Care provision, if required.

She went on to explain that the strategy was designed to enable the Council to manage the significant changes it would face with the proposed introduction of 1140 hours of early childcare and learning from 2020 onwards. She also highlighted a number of key areas which fed in to the strategy including, amongst others, the planned expansion of places for 3 and 4 year olds in the eastern side of the authority; the increasing number of 2 year olds living in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles 1 to 3 being offered a nursery place; the commitment to workforce development and in particular the introduction of an Early Learning and Childcare Foundation Apprenticeship; partnership working with Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) colleagues to supporting the development of children; and the encouragement of links between parents being offered childcare opportunities and other Council services including employability, income maximisation and adult learning and training.

A number of members were heard to express concern at the prospect of the Council being required to increase the provision of early learning and childcare from the current level of 600 hours to 1140 hours but with no confirmation that additional funding would be made available to support this Scottish Government objective. The Director of Education, supported by the Head of Education Services (Provision and Resources), explained that the Council had been asked by Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to provide information regarding the infrastructure requirements to meet the 1140 hours commitment and that the additional workforce costs were also being investigated. The Association of Directors of Education (ADES) was currently engaged in ongoing consultations with the Scottish Government in respect of future funding to meet the commitment.

Following further brief discussion, in the course of which the Head of Education Services (Equality and Equity) reiterated the links between a number of related Council strategies and explained that discussions were currently underway with a number of further education colleges and universities with a view to the creation of an in-house staff training and development programme aimed at the early learning and childcare sector, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) approve the draft Early Learning and Childcare Strategy; and
- (b) request that the Director of Education brings reports to the Education Committee on the impact of implementation of the strategy.

1876

VALEDICTORY REMARKS – ALAN MUNRO, TEACHERS' REPRESENTATIVE

1988. Councillor O'Kane explained that this would be the last meeting of the committee attended by Mr Munro in his capacity as Teachers' Representative as he was due to retire in the near future. He went on to thank Mr Munro for his contribution to the committee since 1998 and, on behalf of the committee, wished him well for his retirement.

Mr Munro responded by stating that it had been a privilege to have been a member of such a positive, constructive and forward-looking committee which had celebrated the many achievements of the young people of East Renfrewshire. He concluded by thanking Councillor O'Kane and the other members of the committee for their good wishes and urged the committee to continue to invest in the young people of East Renfrewshire.

CHAIR