

MINUTE
of
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 23 January 2014.

Present:

Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)
Councillor Tony Buchanan
Councillor Danny Devlin
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)
Councillor Charlie Gilbert
Councillor Alan Lafferty

Councillor Ian McAlpine
Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Vincent Waters
Dr Frank Angell
Mr Alan Munro

Councillor O’Kane in the Chair

Attending:

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision); Mark Ratter, Quality Improvement Manager (Performance Management); and Eamonn Daly, Democratic Services Manager.

Also attending:

John Docherty, Head Teacher and Ellena Zhou, Teacher, St Ninian’s High School.

Apologies:

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair); Reverend Thomas Boyle and Ms Mary McIntyre.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Councillor O’Kane reported that Councillor Green had successfully undergone surgery.

The committee noted the information and agreed that best wishes be sent to Councillor Green for a speedy recovery.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

901. There were no declarations of interest intimated.

GLOBAL AWARD FOR THE EAST RENFREWSHIRE CONFUCIUS HUB

902. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising members of the recent success of the East Renfrewshire Confucius Hub, based in St Ninian's High School, which had been recognised by the Chinese Ministry of Education (Hanban) as the Global Confucius Hub of the Year 2013.

The report explained that the East Renfrewshire Confucius Hub had been established in March 2010 as one of 15 hubs across Scotland as part of the international relationship between the Scottish and Chinese governments to develop and promote the teaching of Chinese language (mainly Mandarin) and culture with funding from the Hanban. The Hub currently has a permanent Chinese teacher at St Ninian's, two seconded teachers from China working across schools, and plans to appoint an additional permanent teacher of Mandarin during session 2013/14. The report outlined a number of outcomes of the Hub including, amongst others, outstanding SQA results at all levels; lunchtime and after school Chinese clubs and activities; a Primary 7 programme offering "First Steps in Mandarin"; success in the British Council Mandarin Speaking contest; and two pupils awarded scholarships to study Mandarin in Tianjin during session 2013/14.

As a result of these successes, the East Renfrewshire Hub had been chosen as one of two Scottish Hubs of the Year 2013 and at the World Confucius Conference 2013 in Beijing in competition with 500 other Hubs worldwide, was selected as Global Hub of the Year 2013. The Head Teacher of St Ninian's High School, John Docherty, had been presented with the award in front of 2,500 delegates representing 118 countries worldwide.

The committee noted the success of the East Renfrewshire Confucius Hub and the positive impact it had had in terms of promoting the learning of Mandarin and greater awareness of Chinese culture.

Councillor O'Kane having highlighted the role of Mr Docherty and Ms Zhou in achieving the global recognition Councillor Lafferty welcomed the fact that part of the role of the Confucius Hub was not only about learning the language but also Chinese culture.

Councillor Fletcher enquired if there were any proposals for learning Mandarin to be rolled out to other schools across East Renfrewshire. In reply, the Director of Education explained that proposals for learning foreign languages, including Mandarin, would be considered later on at the meeting (Item refers).

Thereafter Councillor O'Kane on behalf of the committee presented Mr Docherty and Ms Zhou with a plaque recognising St Ninian's success as Global Confucius Hub 2013.

STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT 2012 – 2013

903. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the proposed content of the Education Department's 2012/13 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 plan 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.

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 next local improvement plan which would be the subject of a future report to the committee. The draft Standards and Quality report highlighted the very good and excellent standards achieved by the department, its schools and services, including details of some of the activities which had been undertaken during the 2012/13 school session and their impact on stakeholders.

It was proposed to issue a summary report to all parents with children attending East Renfrewshire schools with copies going to parents of all pre-school children and copies of the full report being available in all libraries, education, sports and cultural centres and on the Council's website.

The committee:-

- (a) approved the 2012/13 Standards and Quality Report; and
- (b) authorised the Director of Education to take the necessary steps to produce and issue the report as outlined.

EXPLORATION OF A JOINT FAITH SCHOOL CAMPUS

904. Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 3 October 2013 (Page 696, Item 739 refers) when it had been agreed that the department would bring forward a report on the outcome of the informal discussions on the proposal to explore the possibility and affordability of a joint faith school campus with key groups/leaders of the Catholic and Jewish communities to this meeting of the Education Committee, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education updating members of the results of these discussions and of the proposed next steps.

The report outlined the background to the issue and confirmed that initial feedback from a variety of stakeholders including, amongst others, key leaders of each faith and the Parent Councils of Calderwood Lodge and St Cadoc's Primary schools, had been largely positive and supportive of the principle of a joint campus with well reasoned arguments with regard to separate and shared areas to respect each and both faiths. Based on discussions, it was estimated that additional funding of £3.6 million would be required on top of the £10 million estimated in the Council's 8-year Capital Plan for the new Catholic primary school identified as being required within the Newton Mearns area.

The report went on to confirm that there were no plans to change admission arrangements, other than to establish the new Catholic school and alter the existing catchment for St Cadoc's Primary School, details of which would form part of the formal consultation process to be carried out in Spring 2014 subject to the proposed site at Waterfoot Road being deemed suitable and to the availability of the requisite funding. Pupils from Calderwood Lodge School would still be associated with Mearns Castle High School and those from the new Catholic school would be associated with St Ninian's High School.

The report concluded by saying that, should the proposal for a joint faith school campus not gain approval, there would follow an education statutory consultation exercise to establish the new Catholic primary school and pre-five provision.

Councillor McAlpine was heard to welcome the report as an exciting and innovative project highlighting that any feedback he had received from both Catholic and Jewish communities had been very positive. This was supported by Councillor Gilbert who explained that Jewish

Community Representatives were particularly keen on the prospect of an educational facility being provided within the East Renfrewshire area, particularly within Newton Mearns. He further explained that the St Cadoc's Parent Council had sought some clarification around matters relating to the issues of separate Head Teachers of both schools in the joint campus and reminded officers of the need to give careful consideration to traffic management issues around any new buildings. In reply, the Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) explained that traffic management was always considered as part of any development and by way of example referred to the traffic improvements in the vicinity of the new Eastwood High School. Furthermore she explained that the establishment of a new school on the Waterfoot Road site would mean less travelling to St Cadoc's for many residents with a resulting reduction of traffic flow during peak school hours.

Thereafter the Director was heard relative to a very supportive statement issued by Father Boyle on the consultation process to date and that the proposals were being well received by both the Catholic and Jewish communities.

Dr Angell whilst welcoming the proposals reminded the committee that the proposal itself was for a joint campus and not joint schools and as such each school should have its own Head Teacher. Furthermore, he queried whether the value of the Calderwood Lodge school site had been factored into the £3.6m capital resource figure quoted in the report.

In reply, it was explained that £3.6m figure was net of the notional value of the Calderwood Lodge site.

In reply to questions from Councillor McAlpine on the evidence base for establishing different schools in the area, the Head of Education (School Performance and Provision) explained that the department had a large evidence base which demonstrated requirements. They worked closely with colleagues in Environment, particularly Planning Services, and took account of issues such as a new house building and the population census when determining appropriate need for and location of new school premises.

Thereafter, referring to a number of unfounded and inaccurate statements that had been made around the need for additional school provision, Councillor Montague welcomed the standard of information used and the importance of this being as widely shared in the community as possible, Councillor Gilbert suggested it would be useful if statistical information such as that referred to could be shared with elected Members on a regular basis.

The committee agreed to:

- (a) note the positive outcome of the informal consultative exercise which considered the feasibility of a joint faith school campus;
- (b) recognise that capital resources of £3.6m would need to be made available to take forward a new build Calderwood Lodge Primary School as part of a joint faith school campus with the new denominational (Catholic) primary school, already included in the Capital Plan;
- (c) note that the site of the proposed joint faith school campus at Waterfoot Road is a modification to the Proposed Local Development Plan and the planning process, including submission to the Reporter, will ultimately determine if the Waterfoot site is agreed as a school site and so able to accommodate the proposed joint faith school campus;

- (d) instruct the Director of Education to proceed with an education statutory consultation exercise in line with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 on the proposal to establish the joint faith school campus if funding is made available and the Waterfoot site is deemed suitable for a school site.

DRAFT POLICY ON LANGUAGE LEARNING; A 1 + 2 APPROACH

905. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval of the draft policy on Languages Learning in East Renfrewshire based on a 1+ 2 Approach.

The report explained that a working group had been established in August 2013 to consider recommendations made by the Scottish Government Languages Working Group in May 2012 and recommendations made following a review of the quality of learning experiences in modern languages within East Renfrewshire schools which had been conducted during school session 2012/13. The draft policy, a copy of which was appended to the report, was the product of this working group. It was further explained that the policy built on the existing strengths of practice and policy in East Renfrewshire and sought to continue the teaching of an additional language i.e. French, from nursery through to secondary school and to introduce a third language to primary pupils at P5–7. It was explained that the language to be introduced in schools would be based on the existing skills of staff and would be able to be continued in secondary school.

In response to questions, the Director explained why German was not being offered as a second foreign language making particular reference to one of the policy aims which was that the languages taught would assist in the global employment market. However, she clarified that the current languages to be offered was only a starting position and could be revisited at a future date.

The committee agreed to:

- (a) approve the draft policy on Languages Learning in East Renfrewshire based on a 1 + 2 Approach; and
- (b) instruct the Director of Education to implement the policy.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT MID-YEAR REPORT 2013 - 2014

906. The committee considered a report by the Director of Education advising of the mid-year performance of the Council and Community Planning Partnership at the mid-year point in 2013/14 based on performance indicators in the new Outcome Delivery Plan 2013 – 2016 (ODP) and the Single Outcome Agreement 2013 – 2016 (SOA). Detailed performance results were included as an appendix to the report.

Councillor O’Kane invited Mark Ratter, Quality Improvement Manager – Performance Management to make a presentation on the mid-year report.

The Quality Improvement Manager then made a comprehensive presentation to the committee in the course of which a number of key points were highlighted to the committee. These included very high levels of attendance in primary and secondary schools; the lowest number of exclusions to date in primary and secondary schools; continued monitoring of bullying and racist incidents; increased focus on Looked After children and young people; improvement in reading, writing and mathematics attainment for primary pupils including

lowest performing pupils; maintenance of high levels of attainment in numeracy and literacy at P1 base line; continuous improvement for all learners; and the highest ever percentage of school leavers in positive destinations at 95.8%.

A number of members were heard thereafter in respect of the presentation. Commenting on the information provided relative to bullying, particularly that with a racist element, Dr Angell queried if any record was made of bullying with a religious element and if not if it would be possible to have this information provided. In reply, the Director explained that whilst information on bullying in more general terms was provided to the department for the purposes of the performance report, if there were any instances of bullying with religious overtones this was not information that was gathered.

Congratulating the Quality Improvement Manager on the presentation, Councillor Gilbert referred to a presentation in similar terms which had been made to Crookfur Primary School Parent Council. This has been well received and Councillor Gilbert queried whether or not a programme of Parent Council visits to present the current information was being considered.

In reply both the Quality Improvement Manager and Director outlined the mechanism for making presentations to other groups, it being noted that a presentation was made to the Parent Council Chair's Forum and invitations to individual Parent Councils often originated there.

Referring to her earlier comments regarding the need for information to be shared as widely as possible, Councillor Montague suggested that the Parent Council Forum meeting at which the information was presented should be opened up to all Parent Council members. The Director undertook to consider this.

Councillor McAlpine welcomed the information relative to Looked After Children and sought clarification that with regard to exclusions pupils were given the appropriate levels of support. This was confirmed by the Director.

Having heard Councillor O'Kane on behalf of the committee, thank the Quality Improvement Manager for an interesting and informative presentation, the committee agreed to approve the report as a summary of the Education Department's mid-year performance for 2013/14.

CHAIR