

**MINUTE**  
**of**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 24 April 2014.**

**Present:**

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Alan Lafferty
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Councillor Gordon McCaskill
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Mary Montague
Councillor Danny Devlin	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Mr Alan Munro

Councillor Green in the Chair

**Attending:**

Mhairi Shaw, Director of Education; John Fitzpatrick, Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff); Ken McKinlay, Head of Education Services (Culture, Sport and Continuing Education); Fiona Morrison, Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision); Marie Kelly, Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement); Mark Ratter, Education Senior Manager (Planning and Reporting); and Ron Leitch, Committee Services Officer.

**Apologies:**

Councillors Ian McAlpine and Vincent Waters; Dr Frank Angell; and Reverend Thomas Boyle.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1021.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

**CHAIR’S REMARKS**

**1022.** Councillor Green welcomed Marie Kelly who had recently joined the Directorate as Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement) and who was attending her first meeting of the committee.

## LOCAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2014 – 2017

**1023.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the Local Improvement Plan 2014-2017, a copy of which accompanied the report.

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; that it took full account of the current national priority areas and the national outcomes most pertinent to the Education Department and the services provided by the department; and that it would be updated annually to take account of changing priorities. It also took account of the Council's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2013 - 2016 and the Council's new Corporate Statement 2013 – 2017.

The report further explained that the expected outcomes and impact were organised under the wellbeing indicators as set out in the national programme *Getting it Right for Every Child* (GIRFEC) and had been reviewed and amended to reflect national developments and the results of the department's ongoing self-evaluation. High level areas for improvement were outlined and gave an indication of the priorities for development and the activities the department, schools and services would undertake to make the necessary improvements in the quality of their provision. It was expected that the authority would negotiate and work with managers and head teachers to use the department's and schools' own self-evaluations, information gathered through external evaluations and the local improvement plan to identify priorities for their own improvement plans.

Responding to comments from members with regard to the holiday sports programme and the level of charges in leisure centres, the Head of Education Services (Culture, Sport and Continuing Education) explained that an enhanced programme of activities had been organised to coincide with the development of The Foundry in Barrhead but that a full and inclusive holiday programme would still run across the entire authority area and that a range of concession schemes existed which were designed to minimise charges to users. He also advised that a review of services was currently underway and that as part of that review the level of charges would be taken into account.

In response to comments from Councillor Swift on the apparent deterioration in the figures relating to SQA examination performance as outlined in the report on the Local Government Benchmarking Framework: 2012-13 Performance which had recently been considered by the Cabinet, the Education Senior Manager (Planning and Reporting), supported by the Director of Education, highlighted that this was explained by the method adopted in compiling the figures. They emphasised that improving the attainment of the lowest performing 20% of East Renfrewshire's school age children, and especially looked-after children, and improving the readiness of children to learn, remained a major priority for the Council. The Director went on to explain that the development and implementation of a Literacy Strategy extended across the entire Council and was not confined to the Education Department alone.

Following further brief discussion the committee approved the Local Improvement Plan 2014-2017.

## PRE-5 EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT

**1024.** 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 report explained that The Scottish Government's aspiration through the Early Years Collaborative had set out clear intentions to improve the outcomes for all of Scotland's children and that the Council's focus in this regard would remain on the earliest years. The Council's Early Years Strategy (2013) had a strong focus on prevention and early intervention and detailed the approach to be taken by partners in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) while at the same time improving outcomes in the early years. The recently passed Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 would also place a number of additional duties on local authorities which would have a bearing on early learning and childcare.

The report went on to outline a number of key issues including the significant progress which had been made in a number of areas by the Education Department following on from the recommendations made by the early intervention strategy working group; a new model for allocating additional educational resource for children aged 0 – 5 years; training for staff to help build on essential literacy skills; the provision of additional capacity to meet the demand for nursery places; the new duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare to all 3 and 4 year olds and certain 2 year olds from August 2014; the current and anticipated capacity in both local authority and partnership establishments; and an update on workforce planning issues highlighting the support offered to nursery and childcare staff to undertake additional training and development. The proposed next steps for all of these areas were also outlined.

Councillor Fletcher expressed some concern regarding a number of issues raised in the report and cautioned against raising the expectations of parents and carers until further information was received from The Scottish Government with regards to the future financing of a number of proposed national initiatives in the field of pre-5 education and child care services. In response, the Director of Education clarified that the Council was only able to offer flexibility in respect of the additional 30 hours of provision and expressed the view that the requirement contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to consult and plan on the delivery of early learning and childcare very 2 years should help with the management of parents' expectations.

Responding to further questions and comments from members, the Director explained that training to support the early literacy strategy was targeted at staff working with children in the lowest attaining areas and that as the strategy was aimed at 3 – 5 year-old children there was less urgency to train staff in Glen and Madras Family Centres as both of these establishments would be catering for children from birth to 3 years. She also explained that the Council required an average of 2300 preschool places for 3 and 4 year-old children in any one year to meet demand and that the combined capacity of Council centres and places commissioned from private and voluntary providers meant that this target would be met. However, it was also explained that the Council did not set the prices charged by partner providers and that the decision as to which centre children attended was often a matter of parental choice.

Mr Munro expressed his opposition to the proposal to reduce teacher numbers in nurseries by August 2014 and to replace some teaching staff with Child Development Officers (CDO), a move which he claimed would have a detrimental effect on the education of the youngest children and was not in keeping with the ethos of Curriculum for Excellence which covered educational needs from ages 3 to 18 years. In response, the Director explained that in recruiting to fill CDO posts the Department was looking for a degree level qualification and highlighted the support being offered by the Council to early years' staff including some from partner providers.

Having noted Mr Munro's comments and reservations expressed by a number of other members regarding future financing, the committee agreed to note the contents of the Pre-5 Education and Childcare Annual Report and approve the next steps as outlined.

### **FUTURE NURSERY PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF PRE-SCHOOL AGE IN THE BUSBY/CLARKSTON AREA FOR SCHOOL SESSION 2015/16 AND BEYOND**

**1025.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education seeking approval to consult on a proposal on the future of local authority pre-school provision in the Busby/Clarkston area to take effect from school session 2015/16. A copy of the formal consultative document was appended to the report.

Explaining the background to the proposal to consult, the report referred to The Scottish Government's pledge to increase the pre-school education entitlement to 600 hours from autumn 2014. If approved, the Busby Family Centre proposal would contribute to addressing this major national priority and reference was made to the current nursery provision by local authority, private and voluntary providers within the Busby/Clarkston area. The report also outlined the benefits and consequences of the proposal, which were contained within the formal consultative document, and clarified that the decision would not be subject to Ministerial call-in.

The report went on to explain that the Council's recently approved 8-year Capital Plan indicated an investment in pre-five provision of the additional grant of £966,000 being made available by The Scottish Government over the current and next financial years and that details of further possible capital funding to support the entitlement to 600 hours of early learning and childcare were awaited. The £966,000 would fund the construction of a 60:60 place new build family centre in the Newford Grove area and should sufficient additional resources become available, the centre could be increased to a 90:90 place facility at an estimated additional cost of £257,108. Confirmation had been received from The Scottish Government of additional grant for financial year 2014/15 to cover expected additional revenue costs incurred in the expansion to 600 hours of early learning and childcare.

The proposed consultation period would last from 25 April to 10 June 2014. During that time a public meeting would be held on 28 May 2014 at which Elected Members and senior officers would be present to discuss the proposal with members of the public and to answer any questions. It was anticipated that the results of the consultation exercise would be submitted to the Education Committee for consideration at its meeting on 28 August 2014.

During further discussion the Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) explained that the Newford Grove site had been one of a number of locations considered and had been chosen as the preferred site as it was already in the ownership of the Council which would reduce the timescale for the build should the proposal be approved. If the proposal was approved a full traffic impact assessment would be carried out as part of the consultation process. She also explained that over the past few years there had been a fundamental change in the demographic profile of the area with more families moving into the area in order to access the high quality education provided by local schools.

Thereafter, the committee agreed that the Director of Education proceed with a consultation on a proposal on the future of local authority preschool provision in the Busby/Clarkston area to take effect from school session 2015/16.