

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

**Minute of Meeting held at 10.00am in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Giffnock on 28 August 2014.**

**Present:**

Councillor Elaine Green (Chair)	Councillor Gordon McCaskill
Councillor Paul O’Kane (Vice Chair)	Councillor Jim Swift
Councillor Tony Buchanan	Councillor Vincent Waters
Councillor Jim Fletcher (Leader)	Dr Frank Angell
Councillor Charlie Gilbert	Reverend Thomas Boyle
Councillor Alan Lafferty	Ms Mary McIntyre
Councillor Mary Montague	Mr Alan Munro
Councillor Ian McAlpine	

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.

**Also Attending:**

Michael Di Paola, Head Boy; Andrew Whitehill, Prefect; Alex O’Donnell; Jamie Brownlee Holly Brookes; Fraser McAlpine; and Kate Irvine, Pupils, Isobel Mair School; Grant Beaton; David Ross; and Max Tulloch, Pupils, Woodfarm High School; Katie Dunn and Craig Campbell, Pupils, St Ninian’s High School; Sarah Clark, Lynn O’Brien, Gail McMillan, Wendy Hodes and Arlene Vallance, Staff, Isobel Mair School; and Mari Wallace, Head Teacher, Isobel Mair School and Family Centre.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**1175.** There were no declarations of interest intimated.

## **PRESENTATION – DREAMS COME TRUE WEEKEND 2014**

**1176.** Councillor Green welcomed staff and pupils from Isobel Mair School and pupils from St Ninian's High School and Woodfarm High School who had attended the recent Dreams Come True Weekend and invited the Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) to introduce the presentation.

The Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) explained that a total of twenty five young people with additional support needs from Isobel Mair School had attended the event which had taken place at the Lochgoilhead Outdoor Centre from 13 –15 June 2014. Each young person had been partnered with a senior pupil from S5 who had volunteered to be a “buddy” to that young person over the weekend, the group also being accompanied by 24 members of staff. He went on to explain that the young people from Isobel Mair School had a number of additional support needs including mobility impairment and communication barriers and that the event had been structured in such a way as to help build confidence in the young people and help build relationships with their peers and “buddies” through challenging but fun events and activities and through the provision of an opportunity to interact in a social setting. The event had been judged a great success by all who had attended.

The committee was then shown a short DVD of the highlights of the weekend.

Councillor Green, supported by other Members, commended the valuable experience gained by all of the participants and expressed the view that the event was one of the most pleasing aspects of her position as Convener for Education and Equalities. On behalf of the committee she thanked all of the young people who had taken part in the event and also thanked those members of staff who had worked so hard and given up their weekend to ensure that the event was such a success.

## **EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT ON ISOBEL MAIR SCHOOL AND FAMILY CENTRE**

**1177.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education regarding the inspection report prepared by Education Scotland following their inspection of Isobel Mair School and Family Centre including the authority-wide sensory support service and the inclusion support service. A copy of the inspection report accompanied the report.

The Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement) was heard relative to the report in the course of which she explained that in assessing the quality indicators in the school Education Scotland had found all five aspects of the work to be excellent. In the family centre two indicators were judged to be very good and one indicator was judged to be good. Key strengths were highlighted, these being the positive nurturing ethos and warm relationships across the family centre, school, sensory support and inclusion support services; creative approaches to involving children and young people in their learning leading to rich, meaningful learning experiences; support for learners' communication including using high-tech communication aids; integrated and inclusive approaches to assessing children and young people's needs, planning their learning and tracking moderating their progress with key partners; processes for self-evaluation which were impacting positively on learners' experiences, achievements, their health and wellbeing and future destinations; and the inspirational and outstanding leadership of the Head Teacher and the impact of leadership for learning across the school. One area for improvement within the family centre was highlighted indicating that the Department and the centre should

continue to build on opportunities for children to have responsibilities, be independent and make choices. An action plan to address the agreed area for improvement had been drawn up and the Quality Improvement Service would work closely with the family centre to support its implementation.

The report explained that the school had been judged by Education Scotland to be excellent in five areas inspected there was no need for an additional action plan and Education Scotland would make no further reports in connection with the inspection of Isobel Mair School and Family Centre. In view of this it was recommended that the school be accredited for its achievements. As a consequence the authority would not carry out any formal quality assurance activities in the school for a period of three years from August 2014 until August 2017.

Members offered their congratulations for an excellent report and commended all staff for their commitment and success in achieving the report which was the best in Scotland for a school catering for children and young people with additional support needs. Having also commended the report, Dr. Angell sought clarification regarding the adequate assessment of the environment in light of the fact that the school was a new, purpose-built building. In response, the Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement) explained that the comment referred to an area of the family centre where food was consumed, the layout of which had been changed to the extent that at the time of the inspection it no longer complied with the appropriate legislation. Steps had since been taken to rectify the problem and the revised layout had been approved by the Care Inspectorate in July.

Mrs Wallace, Head Teacher, explained that everyone connected with the school was delighted with the report which reflected the passion of all concerned, thanked the committee for its support and positive comments, and commended the hard work of staff, pupils, parents, the wider community and the Education Department Directorate and the Quality Improvement Service. She also commended the excellent partnership working between Isobel Mair School and other schools within the authority as well as with other partner agencies.

Thereafter, having heard Councillor Green, on behalf of the committee, wish Mrs Wallace well on her forthcoming retirement, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the content of the Education Scotland Report on Isobel Mair School and Family Centre;
- (b) commend the school's achievements by awarding it accreditation from August 2014 until August 2017; and
- (c) approve the family centre's action plan to address the agreed area for improvement.

### **Urgent Item of Business**

The Chair, by virtue of the need for the committee to be provided with information relating to the recent opinion by Lord Tyre regarding Barrhead High School, authorised consideration of the following item of business.

**BARRHEAD HIGH SCHOOL – OPINION BY LORD TYRE**

**1178.** Councillor Green explained that the Council had stated publicly its disappointment with the opinion of Lord Tyre, reminding members that the Council had sought a legal opinion to clarify its ability to build the proposed new Barrhead High School on the preferred site within Cowan Park. The chosen site had been assessed as being the best as it was the location of the current Barrhead High School so was a logical site for its replacement. Plans were also in place to make improvements to the park following the demolition of the existing school.

Since the publication of Lord Tyre's opinion, the Council had taken legal advice and had already given instruction to lodge an appeal. A further legal route would be to pursue a Private Member's Bill to the Scottish Parliament. However, this was likely to take in the region of 18 months.

She went on to explain that the Council remained undeterred and committed to providing a new school for the children, young people, and the wider community of Barrhead as quickly as possible. In parallel to lodging the appeal, officers were looking at alternative sites within Cowan Park and more widely in Barrhead. Once officers had completed their detailed work a report would be prepared for consideration by the Cabinet in due course.

She concluded by reiterating that, like all Elected Members, the Council remained steadfast in its determination to deliver a new Barrhead High School and would take every step to ensure that this was realised as soon as was practicable.

Councillor Fletcher explained that the Council felt disappointed by Lord Tyre's decision and that the main losers would be the young people and the wider community of Barrhead. Any delay in the building of the proposed new school could lead to an increase in the overall cost of the project as a result the possible loss of grant funding from The Scottish Government with the difference having to be met from the Council's resources. He went on to express his disappointment at a recent article which had appeared in the Barrhead News defending the actions of a small group of local individuals who it appeared were not representative of the views of the wider community of Barrhead. He concluded by stating that he had been reassured that the relevant Council officers had acted entirely properly throughout.

Responding to questions from Councillors Swift and Devlin, the Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) explained that any additional cost would be largely dependent on the length of the delay and that the Council's aim was to minimise the risk of any legal challenge by the Friends of Cowan Park and to deliver a new school as soon as possible.

The committee agreed to note the position.

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**Councillor McCaskill left the meeting at this point.**

## **OVERVIEW OF SQA EXAMINATION RESULTS 2014**

**1179.** Councillor Green invited the Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) to give a brief overview of attainment in SQA examinations in East Renfrewshire schools in 2014.

The Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) referred to some of this year's key highlights with 71 per cent of young people in 4<sup>th</sup> year achieving 5 or more qualifications at Level 5 (Intermediate 2); 77 per cent of young people achieving one or more Higher; 60.5 per cent achieving three or more Highers; and 39 per cent achieving five or more Highers in 5<sup>th</sup> year. Barrhead, Mearns Castle, St Luke's and Woodfarm High Schools had their best ever S4 performance at Level 5 (Intermediate 2). Barrhead and Eastwood High Schools had their best ever Higher results and 50 per cent of 5<sup>th</sup> year pupils at Williamwood High School achieved five or more Highers. The number of young people achieving five or more Highers at grade A in the authority increased from 141 to 171 with 5 of the 7 schools seeing improvement in this area. At Advanced Higher in 6<sup>th</sup> year, the authority achieved its best ever performance with 35 per cent of the original S4 year group achieving 1 or more awards, up from 31 per cent in 2013.

Having heard members congratulate the Education Service, and all those involved in the education system in East Renfrewshire, including pupils and parents, on the excellent results achieved, Councillor Green thanked the Head of Education Services (School Performance and Provision) for her informative overview of the results.

## **HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY – REVIEW OF 2013-14 AND PRIORITIES FOR 2014-15**

**1180.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 22 August 2013 (Page 651, Item 679 refers), when it had been agreed that a further report would be provided at the end of session 2013/14, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education reviewing progress in achieving the key objectives in health, safety and security in 2013/14. The report also looked forward to the forthcoming year noting that the department remained committed to health, safety and security issues and setting further goals for 2014/15. A copy of the Education Department Annual Health, Safety and Security Report accompanied the report.

It was reported that the Education Department remained committed to maintaining and improving its standards in health, safety and security and this was evidenced by work undertaken in 2013/14 and planned activity for 2014/15 contained within the departmental Annual Health, Safety and Security Report 2014.

The Head of Education Services (Culture, Sport and Continuing Education) was heard further regarding the report highlighting that the annual health and safety report had been produced in liaison with the Corporate Health and Safety Unit and showed progress against the key objectives which had been approved by the Education Committee for session 2013/14. He advised that there had been a very slight reduction in the level of accidents or incidents which had been reported and a significant reduction in the number of incidents of violence to staff. A number of priority areas for 2014/15 were outlined including review and update of master safety files on administration of medicines and protocols in medical emergencies and on security in schools; continuation of fire warden training for sports and libraries staff; a review of first aid needs and arrangements; and taking forward the risk assessment group, amongst other things.

In response to questions from Members, the Head of Education Services (Culture, Sport and Continuing Education) explained that the report covered all of the department's buildings including libraries and sports centres and that considerable work had been undertaken at St Luke's High School over the summer holiday period including the replacement and/or strengthening of fire doors and a number of other small works, and he was confident that this would result in a reduction in the risk rating for the school. He also explained that additional supervision of play by staff could lead to a reduction in playground accidents and incidents.

Having heard Councillor Green welcome the reduction in the incidences of violence to staff which had reduced by 50 per cent over the past year, the committee agreed to:-

- (a) note the progress made in 2013/14 in achieving the Education Department's agreed health, safety and security objectives;
- (b) approve the health, safety and security objectives recommended for 2014/15; and
- (c) instruct the Director of Education to provide a further report at the end of session 2014/15.

#### **EDUCATION DEPARTMENT YEAR END REPORT 2013/14**

**1181.** The committee considered a report by the Director of Education informing Members of the year end performance of the Education Department based on performance indicators in the Outcome Delivery Plan (ODP) 2013/16.

It was reported that progress against the performance indicators and activities in the ODP was reviewed on a six-monthly basis and the report set out a high level summary of the performance of the Education Department 2013/14 under the headings of; Outcomes, Customers, Efficiency and People. A number of key highlights under each heading were included along with areas where further improvement was necessary.

An informal consultative exercise to explore the possibility and affordability of a joint faith school campus had been carried out with key groups and leaders of the Catholic and Jewish communities between October and December 2013 with a report being considered by the committee in January 2014. A statutory consultation on the proposal to relocate Arthurlie Family Centre to a new community facility on the site of the former Auchenback Primary School had been undertaken between November 2013 and January 2014 with a report being considered by the committee in March 2014.

Responding to comments from Members, the Education Senior Manager (Quality Improvement) advised that 81 per cent of all pre-five establishments and partnership nurseries had now achieved Family Friendly Accreditation against the target of 50 per cent set for the end of June 2014.

Responding to comments from Councillor Swift regarding what action was being taken to improve the level of sickness absence amongst staff, the Head of Education Services (Inclusion, Schools and Staff) explained that the directorate shared best practice in absence management with all school managers and that the department worked closely with the Council's occupational health provider to try to reduce the level of absence. He also explained that analysis of the figures had highlighted an increase in cancer related absences

and absence relating to staff undergoing surgery. He further explained that the increasing age profile of staff across the department would inevitably lead to an increase in sickness absence and that the department constantly reviewed its target in light of this.

Mr Munro expressed the view that the constant pressure on budgets resulting in reducing staff levels would place additional stress on staff and could lead to a further increase in absence rates.

Following further brief discussion, the committee approved the report as a summary of the Education Department's end year performance for 2013/14.

### **FUTURE NURSERY PROVISION FOR CHILDREN OF PRESCHOOL AGE IN THE BUSBY/CLARKSTON AREA**

**1182.** Under reference to the Minute of the meeting of 24 April 2014 (Page 984, Item 1025 refers) when it had been agreed that the Director of Education should proceed with a consultation 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, the committee considered a report by the Director of Education reporting on the results of the consultation.

The report outlined the background to the consultation and highlighted that the number of valid responses received was 94. A breakdown of the responses along with a summary of the issues raised by both statutory and non-statutory respondees was included in the report.

The Director of Education explained that option appraisals had been carried out on a number of sites in the ownership of the Council with Newford Grove being identified as the best of those identified and this remained the Council's preferred site. She went on to explain, in response to comments from members, that further site investigations would be carried out prior to the submission of a formal planning application and that issues raised through the consultation process with regard to the potential loss of the play park located on the proposed site and concerns over traffic management and road safety would be considered through the statutory planning application process.

Councillor Lafferty, whilst welcoming the proposal to provide a new family centre in the Busby/Clarkston area, sought clarification on the suspension of the need to consult on opening or establishing a new school or stage of education in relation to early learning and childcare as contained in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. In response, the Director clarified that the terms of the Act meant that local authorities could adapt any school or local authority facility, or build a new facility, to expand and provide early learning and childcare without the need to consult; that this suspension would be in place until March 2017; and that there was therefore no duty to consult on the proposal to add provision for 2 year old children to the proposed family centre.

With regard to an enquiry from Councillor Swift who asked what other sites had been considered, the Director undertook to make the information available.

Councillor Green expressed the view that a new family centre was required in the Busby/Clarkston area to further support the Council's Early Years Strategy.

1134

Thereafter, the committee agreed:-

- (a) to approve the proposal to establish a family centre in Busby with a capacity for 90:90 places for 3 and 4 year old children and 20:20 places for 2 year olds;
- (b) that the centre be staffed initially to offer 60:60 places for prescribed preschool children and to build up provision in the centre to meet demand and as resources allow; and
- (c) to note that bids (Capital Project Appraisals) had been prepared for the additional capital required for consideration through the Capital Plan process.

CHAIR