

West Dunbartonshire Council

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 10 March 2010

Subject: Standing Orders relating to membership of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report seeks the views of the Committee on possible changes to the Council's Standing Orders which would alter the membership of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and specifically the possible creation of two places on the Committee for Parent Representatives.

2. Background

- 2.1** At its meeting on 24 March 2010, West Dunbartonshire Council will be asked to consider a number of amendments to its Standing Orders. This report seeks the view of Committee whether, among these should be a proposal to allow two Parent Representatives to sit on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee.
- 2.2.** While it is up to full Council to determine whether Standing Orders should be amended or not, it is appropriate for members of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee to express their opinions on any such changes which may have an impact on the work of this Committee. A change to the membership of the Committee would obviously fall within this definition.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** Membership of committees appointed by Education Authorities is a matter which is covered by legislation. The relevant section of the current legislation is attached as appendix 1.
- 3.2** As the appendix illustrates, there is a requirement for committees appointed by Education Authorities to have a majority of Elected Members and to include three Church Representatives.
- 3.3** West Dunbartonshire Council's Education and Lifelong Learning Committee currently comprises three Church Representatives, two representatives nominated by the teachers' side of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers (LNCT) and 12 Elected Members (6 from the administration, 4 from the opposition and 2 independent members).

- 3.4** Over recent years, the department has made considerable efforts to involve parents more actively in educational matters, not just at school level but at an authority level. Indeed, the Parental Involvement Act requires Education Authorities to engage with parents through a range of strategies.
- 3.5** Recently, the Head of Service Quality passed over the chairmanship of the Parental Involvement Strategy Group to a parent representative.
- 3.6** The Parental Involvement Strategy Group has since expressed the aspiration that parent representatives should have places allocated to them on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee. Obviously, this would allow parents to have their voices heard on the body with principal responsibility for education within the Council.
- 3.7** In light of these factors, Committee is asked to consider whether it would wish to recommend to Council that Standing Orders be changed to allow two parent representatives to sit on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee from May 2010 onwards.
- 3.8** Committee is also asked to consider whether it wishes to recommend to Council that, if places for parents are reserved on Committee, the number of Elected Members on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee should also be increased either by one or two additional members and, if so, whether these members should be from the administration, the opposition or from the remaining independent councillors.
- 3.9** It should be noted that there would be no requirement for there to be an increase in the number of elected members on the committee, since there would still be a clear majority of elected members (12 elected and 7 non-elected members) without any such change. However, Committee may wish to consider whether it would wish to see the preservation of the present ratio of elected to non-elected members.
- 3.10** In addition it will be necessary to consider how such Parent representatives will be selected and in this respect it is proposed that they be nominated by the Parental Involvement Strategy Group.

4. Personnel Issues

- 4.1** There are no personnel issues arising from this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Given the expressed desire by the Parental Involvement Strategy Group that there should be parental representation on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, there could be a risk to the reputation of Committee and Council if that aspiration were denied.
- 6.2** The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act enshrines the right of parents to be involved in the education of their own children and of children generally. It also gives parents the right to indicate ways in which they would wish to be involved in the work of the Education Authority. The Act clearly implies that Education Authorities should respond positively to reasonable requests for parental involvement. Given the fact that the Parental Involvement Strategy Group has requested representation on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee, a refusal to grant this could result in challenge.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in the screening for potential equality impact of this measure.

8. Conclusion and Officers' Recommendations

- 8.1** Committee is asked to consider whether it wishes to recommend to Council that Standing Orders be amended to include a requirement for two places to be allocated to parent representatives on the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee from May 2010 onwards, to be nominated by the Parental Involvement Strategy Group and, if so, whether it wishes to recommend to Council that Standing Orders be amended to create one or two additional places for Elected Members on this Committee and, if so, to which political groupings such a place or places should be allocated.

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Appendices:	Appendix 1: Membership of Committees appointed by Education Authorities
Background Papers	None
Wards Affected:	All Wards