

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

At a Hybrid Meeting of the Educational Services Committee held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Karen Murray Conaghan, Gurpreet Singh Johal, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Michelle McGinty, June McKay, John Millar, Lawrence O'Neill, Lauren Oxley, Martin Rooney and Clare Steel, and Mrs Barbara Barnes, Mr Gavin Corrigan, Reverend Ian Miller and Ms Julia Strang.

Attending: Peter Hessett, Chief Executive; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Alan Douglas, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); Alison Bowers, Senior Education Officer – Early Learning & Childcare; Andrew Brown, Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance & Resources; Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer – Services for Children & Young People; Julie McGrogan, Senior Education Officer – Raising Attainment/Improving Learning; Michelle Lynn, Assets Co-ordinator; Joe Reilly, Business Unit Finance Partner (Education); and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Daniel Lennie, John Millar, Gordon Scanlan and Hazel Sorrell, and Miss Cara Cusick MSYP and Miss Ellen McBride.

Councillor Clare Steel in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Councillor Clare Steel, Chair, advised that the meeting was being audio streamed and broadcast live to the internet and would be available for playback.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

RECORDING OF VOTES

The Committee agreed that all votes taken during the meeting would be carried out by roll call vote to ensure an accurate record.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Councillor Steel, Chair, welcomed Alison Bowers, the new Senior Education Officer – Early Learning & Childcare, to her first meeting of the Committee and also Reverend Ian Miller who had recently been appointed as the Church of Scotland's Religious Representative on the Committee.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meetings of the Educational Services Committee held on 21 June 2023 (Ordinary) and 7 July 2023 (Special) were submitted and approved as correct records.

LOCAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR TEACHERS

The Minutes of Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 13 June 2023 were submitted and all decisions contained therein were approved.

OPEN FORUM

The Committee noted that no open forum questions had been submitted by members of the public.

CONTRACT AUTHORISATION REPORT – SCHOOL TRANSPORT SESSION 2023/24

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer informing of the arrangements for school transport for session 2023/24, and the use of delegated authority taken through the provision of Standing Orders and financial regulations by the Chief Education Officer in the awarding of contracts in June 2023.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance & Resources and the Senior Education Officer – Services for Children & Young People, in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the Chief Education Officer, in liaison with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) on behalf of West Dunbartonshire Council, concluded the award of the provision of mainstream school transport contracts from August 2023 as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (2) to note that the contracts shall be for a maximum period of 1 year and at the cumulative value of £474,373 per annum (ex VAT);

- (3) to note that work to award contracts took place during the period of statutory consultation in regards to the proposed change in free school transport policy, which the Educational Services Committee agreed not to implement in July 2023;
- (4) to note: (i) that due to operational procedures and timescales, the Authority required to notify SPT to proceed with necessary arrangements to ensure school transport provision was in place for the start of the new school term; and (ii) that, as this was outwith the timescale of reporting to Committee, it required the use of delegated authority through the financial regulations Q8 1c);
- (5) to note: (i) that of the 15 contracts advertised, bids were not received for 4 contracts; (ii) that on discussion with the industry, there had been a reduction in the availability of services and contractors, and that contractors were reluctant to bid for contracts should there have been a change in policy by the Council; and (iii) that SPT re-advertised the contracts and forwarded recommendations; and
- (6) to note the Chief Education Officer in liaison with SPT would award any further contracts for and during school term 2023/2024 for contracts not exceeding £50,000.

INCREASE SUSTAINABLE RATE PAID TO FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer setting out a proposal to increase the hourly rate paid by West Dunbartonshire Council to contracted private providers for funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Early Learning & Childcare and the Business Unit Finance Partner (Education) in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to increase the hourly rate paid to ELC private providers, including childminders, for the provision of funded ELC from £5.67 to £5.84 for 3 and 4 year olds from 1 August 2023; and
- (2) to note the external factors influencing the sustainability of the hourly rates paid to contracted providers of funded ELC in West Dunbartonshire, including rising costs and wages.

STRATEGY TO RAISE ATTAINMENT AND ACHIEVEMENT IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer providing an update on progress with implementing Educational Services' improvement priorities for excellence and equity.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Raising Attainment/Improving Learning in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the key activities planned for session 2023/24 to further improve equity and excellence outcomes for children and young people;
- (2) to note the alignment of the plans for 2023/24 with the National Improvement Framework and Strategic Equity Fund reporting and planning expectations; and
- (3) to note: (i) that a Strategy for Excellence and Equity would replace the current Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement; and (ii) that this has been developed to reflect current local and national policy for education

LITERACY AND NUMERACY – BENCHMARKING

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer advising on the attainment progress and performance of the Strategy to Raise Attainment and Achievement in West Dunbartonshire at Early Years, P1, P4, P7 and S3 in academic session 2022/2023.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Raising Attainment/Improving Learning, the Senior Education Officer – Early Learning & Childcare, and the Chief Education Officer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the performance analysis and the progress made in academic session 2022/2023 to raise attainment and tackle the poverty-related attainment gap.

SUMMER HOLIDAY 2023 PROGRAMME EVALUATION

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer:-

- (a) providing an update on plans to reduce holiday hunger and provide childcare support across West Dunbartonshire Council during summer 2023; and
- (b) informing and updating on the additional Scottish Government funding allocations, the governance of funding and impact of projects.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Services for Children & Young People in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the progress and impact of authority-wide plans by partners to reduce holiday hunger and provide childcare provision; and
- (2) to note the ways in which the fund has been administered and governed.

EDUCATION DELIVERY PLAN 2022/23 – YEAR-END PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer setting out the year-end progress of the 2022/23 Delivery Plan.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance & Resources and relevant officers in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the progress achieved at year-end.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT TO 30 JUNE 2023 (PERIOD 3)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the financial performance of Education Services to 30 June 2023 (Period 3).

Having heard the Business Unit Finance Partner (Education) in further explanation of the report and in answer to a Member's questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the revenue account currently showed a projected annual adverse revenue variance of £1.865m (1.6% of the total budget); and
- (2) to note that the capital account showed a projected nil variance.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.

