

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

At a Hybrid Meeting of the Educational Services Committee held in the Civic Space, 16 Church Street, Dumbarton on Wednesday, 19 March 2025 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Provost Karen Murray Conaghan and Councillors Fiona Hennebry, Gurpreet Singh Johal, David McBride, Michelle McGinty, John Millar, Lawrence O'Neill, Lauren Oxley, Martin Rooney, William Rooney, Gordon Scanlan, Hazel Sorrell and Sophie Traynor, and Mr Gavin Corrigan*, Miss Ellen McBride, Ms Joanne McLaren and Ms Julia Strang.

*Arrived later in the meeting.

Attending: Peter Hessett, Chief Executive; Laura Mason, Chief Education Officer; Alison Bowers, Senior Education Officer – Early Learning and Childcare; Andrew Brown, Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance and Resources; Claire Cusick, Senior Education Officer – Services for Children and Young People; Julie McGrogan, Senior Education Officer – Raising Attainment/Improving Learning; Michelle Lynn, Asset Manager; Carol Alderson, Finance Manager – Resources; Alan Douglas, Chief Officer – Regulatory and Regeneration (Legal Officer); and Scott Kelly, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor Clare Steel, Mrs Barbara Barnes and Reverend Ian Miller.

Councillor John Millar in the Chair

STATEMENT BY CHAIR – AUDIO STREAMING

Councillor Millar, 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.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Educational Services Committee held on 27 November 2024 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

LOCAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR TEACHERS

The Minutes of Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 3 December 2024 were submitted for information and, where necessary, ratification.

After discussion and having heard the Chief Education Officer in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the Minutes 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.

PROCUREMENT OF ONLINE PAYMENTS SYSTEM AND CASHLESS CATERING SYSTEM

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer seeking approval:-

- (a) to tender for an online payments system for all establishments to allow parents and carers to make online payments to their children's school; and
- (b) for a cashless catering system for use in the Authority's secondary schools which would work in conjunction with the online payments system.

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

- (1) to note the plan for the replacement of the online payment system for all establishments and the replacement of the existing cashless catering system in use within West Dunbartonshire's secondary schools utilising the Scot Excel Framework for Online School Payments, Cashless Catering and Kitchen Management Systems;

- (2) to note that the cost of both new systems would come from the existing budget for the current systems being used in schools; and
- (3) to approve the proposal to tender for the provision of an online payments system and cashless catering system and to note that the award recommendation would be reported to a future meeting of the Tendering Committee.

Note: Mr Corrigan entered the meeting during consideration of this item.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer detailing the proposed timetable for the processing of tenders for mainstream home-to-school contracts and for the transportation of pupils with Additional Support Needs (ASN).

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance and Resources in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the Chief Education Officer be given approval to proceed, in consultation with the Corporate Procurement Unit, with the necessary arrangements to secure tenders for the transport of children with Additional Support Needs for session 2025/26 and beyond for contracts of up to 3 years duration with the option to extend for a further 12 months;
- (2) that the Chief Education Officer be authorised to make the necessary arrangements, in liaison with Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT), to renew any mainstream contracts for session 2025/26 to 2030/31; and
- (3) to note that following the completion of the tendering process, the proposed preferred tenderers would be submitted to the Educational Services Committee for approval to award the Contract, Framework Agreement or Dynamic Purchasing System.

STRATEGY FOR EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer providing an update on the progress of implementing the service plan for excellence and equity, and highlighting future challenges and risks that could impact further progress.

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

- (1) the positive attainment and equity performance of West Dunbartonshire in the Broad General Education compared to the national performance;

- (2) the national statutory expectations and outcomes for education;
- (3) the additional funding provision ending in 2026; and
- (4) the range of improvement and development work delivered to support improved attainment and a narrowing of the attainment gap.

SENIOR PHASE CURRICULUM UPDATE

Reports were submitted by the Chief Education Officer providing updates on:-

- (a) the offer of courses and awards to young people through the Senior Phase curriculum for session 2025/26; and
- (b) progress with plans to ensure an equitable offer across all establishments.

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

- (1) the breadth of the offer to young people by our partner providers; and
- (2) the progress of a common Senior Phase timetable across all of our secondary schools.

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROGRESS UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer informing of progress made to provide high quality Early Learning and Childcare in West Dunbartonshire Council.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Early Learning and Childcare in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the progress to deliver the statutory entitlement of 1,140 hours of high quality Early Learning and Childcare.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES UPDATE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer informing of progress on supports to children, young people and families.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Services for Children and Young People in further explanation of the report and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note progress on plans to continue developing and improving supports.

EDUCATION DELIVERY PLAN 2023/24 – YEAR-END PROGRESS AND EDUCATION DELIVERY PLAN 2024/25 – MID-YEAR PROGRESS

A report was submitted by the Chief Education Officer setting out the year-end progress of the 2023/24 Delivery Plan and the mid-year progress of the 2024/25 Delivery Plan.

After discussion and having heard the Senior Education Officer – Policy, Performance and Resources in further explanation of the report, the Committee agreed to note the progress achieved at year-end 2023/24 and mid-year 2024/25.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES REVENUE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT 2024/25 TO 31 JANUARY 2025 (PERIOD 10)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the Educational Services revenue budget to 31 January 2025 (Period 10) and the forecast position at 31 March 2025.

After discussion and having heard the Finance Manager – Resources and the Senior Education Officer – Services for Children and Young People in answer to a Member's question, the Committee agreed to note that the 2024/25 revenue account had a projected adverse revenue variance of £0.311m which became a favourable variance of £0.006m after use of earmarked reserves (as detailed in paragraph 6.2 of the report).

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CAPITAL BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT 2024/25 TO 31 JANUARY 2025 (PERIOD 10)

A report was submitted by the Chief Officer – Resources providing an update on the Educational Services capital programme to 31 January 2025 (Period 10).

After discussion and having heard the Finance Manager – Resources and the Asset Manager in answer to a Member's questions, the Committee agreed to note:-

- (1) the current position of the 2024/25 Educational Services capital budget;
- (2) that the project life total was currently on track; and
- (3) that one project, Free School Meals had moved from Citizen, Culture and Facilities (CCF) to Educational Services.

The meeting closed at 12.20 p.m.