



## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2014  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

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### **Committee Members Present:**

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)  
Councillor S Brown  
Councillor J Caldwell  
Councillor S Currie  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor D Grant  
Councillor J Gillies  
Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor M Libberton  
Councillor P MacKenzie  
Councillor F McAllister  
Councillor J McNeil (Items 4 – 8)  
Councillor J Williamson  
Mr S Bunyan  
Mrs M Goldsmith  
Mr M McHugh

### **Council Officials Present:**

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)  
Mr D Nightingale, Head of Education  
Ms M Ferguson, Service Manager – Legal & Procurement  
Mr E John, Service Manager – Sport, Countryside & Leisure  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy & Operations)  
Ms A Mitchell, Service Manager – Education (ASN & Early Years)  
Ms M Cunningham, Training & Development Officer (Education)

### **Clerk:**

Ms F Currie, Committees Assistant

### **Visitors Present:**

Ms L Brookes, Outdoor Education Teacher  
Mrs M Tremmel, Head Teacher, Gullane Primary School (and pupils)

### **Apologies:**

Councillor D Berry  
Councillor W Innes  
Councillor M Veitch

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

**1. MINUTE OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2014 FOR APPROVAL**

The minute of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 18 June 2014 was presented for approval.

**Decision**

The Committee approved the minute of the Education Committee of 18 June 2014.

**2. OVERVIEW OF THE EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL OUTDOOR LEARNING SERVICE AND HSE ADVENTURE ACTIVITY (AALA) INSPECTION REPORT**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) providing the Committee with an overview of the Outdoor Learning Service and an update on the HSE Adventure Activity Licensing Authority (AALA) Inspection Report on East Lothian Council Outdoor Learning Service.

Ms Liz Brookes, Outdoor Education Teacher, presented the report providing a brief overview of the Outdoor Learning Service and its role in delivering the Single Outcome Agreement and the Curriculum for Excellence for both mainstream and ASN pupils. She explained the process for the AALA inspection which she noted had been very successful and had concluded that no action was required.

Responding to questions from Members, Ms Brookes advised that there had been a significant increase in classes going into their local environment, i.e. within walking distance of their bases, be it country or coastal. She pointed out that the increase in groups going into the hills was less marked but this reflected the requirement for appropriately trained staff. A teacher needed to invest around a year of their time to attain the necessary hill & moorland and mountain leader qualifications and experience. Ms Brookes indicated that training of both staff and volunteers remained a challenge and could limit further expansion of the outdoor learning programme.

Councillor Williamson commented that, as someone who had used the service, he could vouch for the quality of the staff and facilities.

Councillor MacKenzie reflected that the experience of being outdoors remained with pupils long after their school days had ended and was one which should not be underestimated. Councillor Goodfellow echoed these remarks.

The Convenor also concurred and congratulated Ms Brookes on an excellent inspection report.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and in particular the successful HSE Adventure Activity Licensing Authority Inspection Report.

### **3. INSPECTION OF GULLANE PRIMARY AND NURSERY CLASS BY EDUCATION SCOTLAND**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) informing the Committee of the inspection of Gullane Primary School and Nursery Class.

Mrs Maureen Tremmel, Head Teacher at Gullane Primary School, presented the report which highlighted a number of strengths and some areas for improvement within both the primary and nursery schools. She drew Members' attention to the action plan and work already underway to address the Inspector's recommendations. Mrs Tremmel praised her energetic, positive and motivated staff team and acknowledged the continued support from parents. The presentation concluded with short contributions from two pupils from P4 and P7.

Councillor Goodfellow, also speaking on behalf of Councillor Berry, thanked Mrs Tremmel and her staff for their hard work and dedication. He noted that, despite what he considered to be an unduly harsh inspection report, parents of pupils were clearly very satisfied with the level of education provided in both the primary and nursery classes.

Councillor Currie pointed out that inspection reports could only ever present a snapshot rather than a complete picture. Referring to positive comments within the report that children felt "settled and happy" and "safe and well cared for", he considered these to be excellent building blocks for the future of the school.

The Convenor also congratulated Mrs Tremmel, noting the high quality of staff leadership and teamwork and that pupils appeared motivated and engaged in their learning.

#### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report.
- (ii) Note the content of the Action Plan.
- (iii) Note that as a result of the good quality of education provided by the school, Education Scotland will make no further visits to the school in connection with the recommendations of this report.
- (iv) Congratulate the Head Teacher and staff on the contents of the report.

*Sederunt – Councillor McNeil joined the meeting.*

### **4. LITERACY IN EAST LOTHIAN SCHOOLS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) informing the Committee of the work going on within schools, clusters and across the local authority to raise attainment in Literacy.

Mr Darrin Nightingale, the Head of Education, presented the report which had been postponed from the Committee's June meeting. He provided a brief summary of its content and an update on progress since it was written in May. The report focused on the development of reading skills in both primary and secondary schools and

Mr Nightingale drew Members' attention to a number of successful initiatives including 'Muckle Reading' and 'Tots and Teens'. He also pointed out that the model for moderation developed in the Musselburgh cluster had been recognised by HM Inspectors as 'sector leading'. He concluded that there was a great deal of good work going on within schools, clusters and across the local authority to raise attainment in literacy.

Members asked questions on the time allocated to reading within the school day, the use of new technology and implementation of the bedtime reading initiative.

Ms Alison Mitchell, Service Manager – Education (ASN & Early Years), agreed that it was important to empower pupils to be responsible for their own learning and to provide time for them to use the library and other facilities to encourage reading. She explained that the bedtime reading initiative was particularly important to early years' development. It not only improved reading skills but also encouraged bonding and communication between the parent and child. Mr Nightingale added that in some cases it had encouraged parents who were having difficulties to seek support to improve their own reading skills.

Ms Mitchell acknowledged the importance of using new technologies such as interactive boards in classrooms, iPads and Kindles to facilitate learning. Mr Nightingale referred to pilot projects currently underway in Ormiston Primary School and Preston Lodge High School to upgrade their Wi-Fi networks and encourage pupils to use their own devices for reading in school.

Mr Stephen Bunyan, one of the Committee's religious representatives, commented that by encouraging their children to read parents could rediscover their own interest in reading. He welcomed the initiatives outlined in the report and noted their results as very encouraging.

Councillor MacKenzie noted the importance of meeting the target of every child being able to read by the time they reach P7 and of ensuring that whatever is achieved in primary school is built upon in secondary school.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **5. SCHOOL SESSION DATES (2015/16)**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for the School Session dates for 2015/2016.

Mr Richard Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strategy & Operations), presented the report noting the encouraging responses received to the consultation from residents and employees of the Council. He indicated that following discussions with Edinburgh and Midlothian Councils, adjustments had been made to some of East Lothian's dates and, for future years; plans were underway to agree a 3 year timetable instead of the present annual exercise.

The Convenor thanked Mr Parker and agreed that a 3 year timetable of dates would be good idea.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Approve the school session dates for 2015/2016.
- (ii) Authorise notification to Head Teachers, Teachers' Associations, Heads of Establishments and Parent Councils.
- (iii) Authorise notification to the Scottish Government Education Department.

## **6. PROFESSIONAL REVIEW & DEVELOPMENT (PRD) PROFESSIONAL UPDATE VALIDATION OF PROCESSES BY THE GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL OF SCOTLAND (GTCS)**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) informing the Committee of the recent validation of the Professional Review & Development (PRD) Professional Update processes that apply to teaching staff registering with the General Teaching Council of Scotland (GTCS).

Ms Margo Cunningham, Training and Development Officer (Education), presented the report pointing out that East Lothian Council's PRD Professional Update process was validated on 2 July 2014 with no conditions and only a small number of recommendations. She stated that the GTCS had identified a number of key strengths and had commended the Council's commitment to the process.

Responding to a question from Councillor MacKenzie, Ms Cunningham confirmed that the Council's priorities for training and development were determined by the overall needs of the service.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the positive report received from the GTCS panel that validated East Lothian Council's processes unconditionally and made a number of recommendations which are being addressed.

## **7. EDUCATION ACCESSIBILITY STRATEGY 2014-2016**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) informing the Committee of the draft Accessibility Strategy 2014-2016.

Ms Mitchell presented the report outlining the background to the current draft Accessibility Strategy and drawing particular attention to the Action Plan. She sought Members' approval of the draft Strategy and proposals to undertake a consultation involving all stakeholders in East Lothian.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Mitchell explained that the Council was required to make all playgrounds accessible to ASN pupils and work was already underway to do so. She also confirmed that a policy to tackle bullying in ASN schools would shortly be finalised. She advised that a certain amount of public consultation had already taken place involving questionnaires and multi disciplinary working groups. Mr Nightingale stated that the overall response rate had been low and further consultations were planned.

Councillor Currie welcomed the draft strategy and the work being undertaken to tackle issues such as bullying. He noted that many of the aims of the legislation were already being implemented in East Lothian and that this strategy would allow further progress to be made.

The Convenor thanked officers for their work on the draft Strategy and Action Plan, acknowledging the importance of consulting as widely as possible.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Approve the draft Accessibility Strategy 2014-2016.
- (ii) Authorise consultation on the draft Accessibility Strategy with relevant stakeholders.

**8. EAST LOTHIAN COUNCIL PLACING APPEALS 2014**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources & People Services) informing the Committee of the outcome of East Lothian Council's Placing Appeals in 2014.

Mr Nightingale presented the report advising Members that 13 appeals had been heard by the Education Appeals Committee in May 2014. The Committee had agreed to uphold the Education Authority's decision in 12 appeals and one further hearing was adjourned and the appeal subsequently withdrawn.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the outcome of the Placing Appeals.

Signed .....

Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Convener of the Education Committee