



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

**TUESDAY 31 MAY 2016  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)  
Councillor D Berry  
Councillor S Brown  
Councillor J Caldwell (Items 1 – 5)  
Councillor S Currie  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor D Grant  
Councillor J Gillies  
Councillor J Goodfellow  
Councillor W Innes  
Councillor M Libberton  
Councillor P MacKenzie  
Councillor F McAllister  
Councillor J McNeil  
Councillor M Veitch (Items 1 – 5)  
Councillor J Williamson  
Mr S Bunyan  
Ms G Gillan  
Mrs M Goldsmith

**Council Officials Present:**

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive – Resources & People Services  
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education  
Mr R Parker, Service Manager – Education (Strat. & Ops)  
Ms M Ferguson, Service Manager – Legal & Procurement  
Ms E Wilson, Service Manager – Economic Development & Strategic Investment  
Mr P Reynolds, Head Teacher, Ross High School  
Ms L Rodger, Head Teacher, North Berwick High School  
Ms A Hood, Team Leader (Employability)  
Ms L Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms J Mackay, Media Manager

**Clerk:**

Ms F Currie, Committees Assistant

**Apologies:**

Provost L Broun-Lindsay  
Councillor P McLennan

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

The Convener welcomed Fiona Robertson to the meeting as the Council's new Head of Education.

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MARCH 2016 FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes of the meeting of the Education Committee held on 8 March 2016 were approved.

Item 3 - Councillor Berry asked whether Members' comments on the inspection report had been passed on to Education Scotland. The Convener advised that the Quality Improvement Officers had been in touch with Education Scotland to highlight Members' concerns.

**2. POSITIVE SCHOOL LEAVER DESTINATIONS AND MORE CHOICES MORE CHANCES (MCMC)**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update the Committee on positive school leaver destinations, highlighting the recent School Leaver Destination Report (SLDR) and employability activity within East Lothian.

Alison Hood, Team Leader (Employability), presented the report outlining the key points and providing Members with additional background information relating to the range of activities being undertaken to help improve positive leaver destinations in East Lothian.

Councillor Currie asked why those on paid work experience with the Council were not paid the Living Wage. Ms Hood explained that the programme involved a significant amount of learning and was seen in the same light as a Modern Apprenticeship which was paid at the National Minimum Wage. Councillor Currie expressed his concern and suggested that this practice be reviewed. The Convener said that his comments would be noted and taken on board.

Members discussed other aspects of the report at length and Ms Hood, along with Paul Reynolds, Head Teacher at Ross High School, responded to a number of questions on issues such as plans to target young people in negative destinations, the inclusion of social care in the prevocational prospectus, promoting opportunities through Leavers Fairs, the new Construction Academy and School Hub meetings.

Councillor Currie said this was a hugely positive paper and one of the key issues would be monitoring the progress of young people once they moved into a positive destination. He also welcomed the creation of the Construction Academy noting that East Lothian had a long history of supporting traditional trades.

Councillor McAllister was impressed with the level of detail in the report which allowed officers to target individuals and support them into a positive destination. He welcomed the idea of regular Leavers Fairs and supported the payment of the Living Wage for young people on work experience.

Councillor MacKenzie also welcomed the report and acknowledged the value of work experience and of pupils undertaking college courses alongside their school work.

Councillor Innes said this was a powerful and positive report which demonstrated the wide range of options available to school leavers in East Lothian. He commented on the importance of targeting those who needed additional support and noted with pleasure the improvements year on year.

Councillor Goodfellow pointed to the benefits of being a smaller local authority where officers could identify those young people in negative destinations and work with them individually to improve their prospects.

The Convener concluded the debate by thanking officers for their hard work and commitment to supporting young people to achieve positive destinations.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Note the contents of the report;
- ii) Acknowledge the wide range of activities being undertaken to help improve positive leaver destinations in East Lothian, in particular the work being undertaken to engage with the hardest to reach young people; and
- iii) Note that, in partnership with Education colleagues and external partners, the Council has a significant level of detail regarding those young people in a negative destination and that resource is targeted at engaging with these individuals.

### **3. VALIDATED SELF EVALUATION OF EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to report on the Validated Self Evaluation of the Educational Psychology Service by Education Scotland.

Dr Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, presented the report highlighting the key strengths identified by Education Scotland and those areas with scope for improvement.

In response to questions from Members, Dr Binnie expanded on the work of the service, the results of the self evaluation and the actions to be included in the improvement plan.

Councillor Currie welcomed the report and noted that a review of the service was underway. He hoped that this would ensure that there were sufficient resources to meet demand.

Councillor Grant said this was a good and honest report and he was pleased to note the progress made in recent years.

Councillor Innes commented on the complex nature of psychological services and the excellent progress outlined in the report. He added that any gaps in resources

would have been identified in the audit and he had confidence in Dr Binnie to continue to deliver a quality service.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Note the content of the Education Scotland report;
- ii) Thank the Educational Psychology Service on the good practice identified and positive feedback received from Education Scotland on the Service provided to children and young people in East Lothian; and
- iii) Note that as a result of the improvement areas identified the Principal Educational Psychologist will be working closely with the Head of Education and Education Service Manager (Additional Support Needs/Early Years) to take forward the recommendations. These will be formalised into an Action Plan which will in turn inform the Service Improvement Plan.

## **4. NATIONAL IMPROVEMENT FRAMEWORK**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to ask the Committee to consider the implications that the National Improvement Framework will have on the Education Service and schools across East Lothian.

Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, presented the report drawing Members' attention to the key priorities and six key drivers contained within the National Improvement Framework. She also provided details of the reporting procedures and updates to the Local Improvement Plan and the Quality Assurance Policy.

Ms Robertson responded to a numbers of questions from Councillor Berry providing clarification on attainment in relation to literacy and numeracy, the inclusion of non-academic skills in the curriculum, parental engagement and implications for resources. At Councillor Berry's request, Ms Robertson agreed to provide a follow up report on progress in secondary schools.

Gael Gillan commented that the EIS had been highly involved in the National Improvement Framework, She was on the whole happy with it but there were one or two areas which she felt would require monitoring. She welcomed its adoption in East Lothian and hoped that it could be used to reduce bureaucracy and streamline workloads for staff, allowing them more time for teaching.

Councillor MacKenzie welcomed the report but was disappointed to note that it contained no mention of the OECD.

Councillor Innes reflected that the key priorities of the National Improvement Framework chimed with the direction and outcomes already identified in East Lothian's school service plans and by the East Lothian Partnership.

The Convener thanked Members for their contributions and welcomed the positive comments from the EIS.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Note the Education Service will review its approach to improvement planning and reporting to reflect the National Improvement Framework priorities and key drivers for improvement, as well as current local priorities; and
- ii) Approve that the Head of Service reports back to the Committee as and when appropriate on progress made with the implementation of the National Improvement Framework.

## **5. READING IN EAST LOTHIAN SCHOOLS**

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

Ms Robertson presented the report summarising the background, assessment results and examples of the work being undertaken at school and community level throughout East Lothian to improve attainment in reading.

Responding to questions from Members, Ms Robertson advised on the timing of Primary 1 assessments and when the results are expected, recent trends in InCAS scores and the factors affecting them such as gender, age and levels of deprivation. She also referred to the work being undertaken to identify and replicate good practice and the role of the library service in promoting reading skills.

Councillor Currie commented on the confusing presentation of the data within the report which he found difficult to interpret and said he was unsure what conclusions to draw from the figures. He emphasised the importance of presenting this information in a clear format to provide for appropriate scrutiny by Members and a better understanding by parents.

Councillor Berry agreed that the Committee should have a role in scrutinising this information and said that the report should include recommendations for actions to address the areas for improvement identified by these assessments.

Councillor McAllister welcomed the comments in relation to the library service, early years intervention and other good practice across primary schools. He had himself noted a marked difference between schools due to levels of deprivation and he observed that the attainment gap often ran in parallel with the gap in living standards.

Councillor MacKenzie concurred with his colleague and added that parental engagement was hugely important as was ensuring that parents made the time available to allow their children to read.

Ms Gillan said it had been interesting to listen to the debate around PIPS and InCAS which supported the EIS position that there was huge danger in relying on only one assessment.

The Convener noted that the assessments represented a single snapshot in time and there was a great deal of work being done across the county. In her view, taken overall, the position was very positive one.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the report.

*Sederunt: Councillors Caldwell and Veitch left the meeting.*

## **6. STUDENT EVALUATION OF EXPERIENCE (SEE) SURVEY RESULTS 2015/16**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the results of the 2015/16 Student Evaluation of Experience (SEE) Survey held in November to December 2015 and authority-level trends for the last five years.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the key points relating to the assessment results at school, cluster and authority level and outlining the next steps to inform the school development planning process. She added that, if requested, a progress report could be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Members raised a number of points in relation to the survey results and the need for these to be presented in context and accompanied by further analysis and explanations. Ms Robertson outlined some of the follow up work which was being carried out but accepted that this could have been included in the report. She said that she would take on board Members' comments when preparing the progress report.

Councillor Goodfellow suggested that there should be a greater emphasis on the results which were of statistical significance.

Ms Gillan said that she had been involved with Primary 6 pupils undertaking the survey and a key issue had been their understanding of some of the questions. She felt that there needed to be much more discussion around the survey and it needed to be given the time and importance it deserved.

Councillor Berry commented that he found the report bloated and far too broad brush. He noted that some of the information was useful and some unnecessary and he concurred with Councillor Goodfellow on the presentation of the statistical data.

Councillor Currie also agreed with his colleagues and said it would have been helpful to know which results were of greatest significance. While he welcomed the fact that this data was available he said it was crucial that the information was then used to best effect.

The Convener welcomed the report and the opportunity to work with young people and the Area Partnerships to support schools.

## **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Note the results of the 2015/16 SEE Survey and authority-level trends for the last five years; and
- ii) Authorise the head of Education and relevant stakeholders to make use of the results to inform service planning and support the community planning process.

## **7. REPORTING ON SENIOR PHASE ATTAINMENT (NATIONAL BENCHMARKING MEASURES) TO 2015**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the trends in attainment and achievement in the Senior Phase in East Lothian, including Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) performance, for academic session 2014/15, using the “National Benchmarking Measures” and breadth and depth data from Insight.

Ms Robertson presented the report summarising the background and context for these assessments, detailing the key performance data and the implications for attainment levels within the Senior Phase in East Lothian. She also outlined how this information was being used to make improvements to areas such as timetabling and curriculum planning.

In response to questions from Members, Ms Robertson provided some additional context for the results and outlined how she was making use of the data in her visits to secondary schools and meetings with Head Teachers. She accepted Members’ comments regarding the presentation and level of detail in the report and agreed to take these comments into account for future reports. She explained the purpose of the five year average and added that she was not complacent but was fully aware that further work was required to improve results year on year.

Councillor Berry said he had found the debates on this and previous items very useful and he thanked Ms Robertson for her valuable contributions.

The Convener added her support for Ms Robertson saying that she had been reassured that the necessary action was being taken.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- i) Note that the data contained within the report is based on four “National Benchmarking Measures” and breadth and depth measure, focusing on the performance of Leavers cohorts over the last five years to 2015;
- ii) Note that the four “National Benchmarking Measures” reported by the Scottish Government Insight tool in February 2016 show that attainment and post school participation in East Lothian has improved overall over the five year period to 2015;
- iii) Note that further improvements still need to be made at SCQF Levels 5 and SCQF Levels 6 or better for the Literacy and Numeracy measures and overall in the middle 60% attaining group to bring East Lothian’s performance more in line with the Virtual Comparator; and
- iv) Note the examination results continue to inform and guide actions in each of the six secondary schools’ Schools Improvement Plans.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Convener of the Education Committee