



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

**TUESDAY 13 MARCH 2018  
COUNCIL CHAMBER, TOWN HOUSE, HADDINGTON**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Councillor S Akhtar (Convener)  
Councillor F Dugdale  
Councillor J Findlay  
Councillor A Forrest  
Councillor N Gilbert  
Councillor J Goodfellow (Items 3 – 7)  
Councillor S Kempson  
Councillor K Mackie  
Councillor B Small  
Councillor J Williamson  
Ms G Gillan  
Ms E Malcolm

**Council Officials Present:**

Mr A McCrorie, Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services)  
Ms F Robertson, Head of Education  
Mr D Scott, Quality Improvement Officer  
Mrs F Brown, Principal Officer (Business Unit)  
Mr F Parkinson, Principal Inclusion and Equality Officer  
Dr L Binne, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Ms A Hood, Team Leader (Employability)  
Mr N Craik-Collins, Lead Officer – Curriculum and Estate Development  
Ms C Booth, Communications Officer

**Visitors Present:**

Ms R Marr, Audit Scotland

**Clerk:**

Ms F Currie, Committees Officer

**Apologies:**

Councillor W Innes  
Councillor P McLennan  
Mr S Bunyan

**Declarations of Interest:**

None

The Convener wished to formally express her thanks, and those of the Committee, to members of staff for their hard work and determination during the recent period of adverse weather and for ensuring that the Council's schools were able to re-open as early as possible.

**1. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE ON 21 NOVEMBER 2017 AND 6 FEBRUARY 2018 FOR APPROVAL**

The minutes of the Education Committee meetings on 21 November 2017 and 6 February 2018 were approved.

**2. ROLL CAPPING IN EAST LOTHIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS – SESSION 2018/19**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to ask the Committee to approve the S1-S4 intake levels for East Lothian secondary schools for session 2018/19.

Fiona Brown, Principal Officer (Business Unit), presented the report outlining the background and issues for consideration when reviewing and capping school rolls. She referred Members to the detail of the proposals set out in the report and at the briefing session prior to the meeting.

Councillor Small commented on the dynamic nature of ongoing housing development within the county and its potential for impact on school rolls. He noted that some schools were already close to capacity and that the situation would require careful monitoring.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to maximum intake levels in S1-S4 for session 2018/19, as outlined in the report.

**3. RESERVING PLACES IN SCHOOLS FOR CATCHMENT PUPILS WHO MOVE INTO THE CATCHMENT AREA DURING THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2018/19**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to obtain the Committee's approval for reserving places for incoming catchment pupils at the schools detailed in the report for session 2018/19.

Mrs Brown presented the report outlining the background to the factors taken in account when assessing the demand for reserved places throughout the school estate. She also reminded Members that the recommendations included delegating responsibility for any changes to the number of places held in reserve to the Head of Education.

In response to questions from Members, Mrs Brown provided information relating to capacity at Loretto RC, Longniddry and Gullane primary schools.

Addressing the issue of feedback on the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP), Fiona Robertson, Head of Education, advised that the Reporter was content with the submission from the Education Service and no further information had been requested.

Councillor Forrest commended the report and the work of officers in assessing all of the factors relating to potential school roll increases. He said that in his experience officers had provided consistently accurate predictions in relation to the requirement for reserved places.

The Convener welcomed the positive feedback from the Reporter in relation to the LDP.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to hold in reserve places for incoming catchment pupils for session 2018/19 for primary and secondary schools, as outlined in the report.

## **4. INCLUDED ENGAGED AND INVOLVED: A POSITIVE APPROACH TO PREVENTING AND MANAGING SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to ask the Committee to consider the draft policy *'Included Engaged and Involved: A Positive Approach to Managing School Exclusions'* to enable further consultation to take place.

The report also made the Committee aware of the updated East Lothian Council policy for the prevention and management of exclusion from school in line with the Scottish Government guidance and the legislative framework.

Lynne Binnie, Principal Educational Psychologist, presented the report highlighting some of the key areas covered by the policy, prepared in line with national guidance. She advised Members that following the consultation a further report would be brought to the Committee at its June meeting.

A lengthy debate followed during which Dr Binne and Mr Fraser Parkinson, Principal Inclusion and Equality Officer, responded to questions from Members regarding the level of exclusions and the variance between schools, rights of appeal and issues of confidentiality.

Dr Binne and Mr Parkinson also outlined the main reasons for exclusions and expanded on the approaches contained within the policy around positive engagement with pupils and families and early intervention.

Ms Gillan supported the strategy and welcomed the intention to do the best for children in these circumstances. However, she said that the Council must ensure that the necessary tools and strategies were in place for staff to feel empowered to use the policy.

Councillor Small noted that the Council would be able to measure the performance and effectiveness of the policy and hopefully see a reduction in exclusion rates within the county's schools.

Councillor Dugdale welcomed the report and the proposals for further consultation. She added that she was particularly pleased to hear the examples of positive engagement with pupils who had previously been excluded.

The Convener said it was important to have a high level of engagement with staff and young people and she looked forward to the follow up report in June.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Consider the draft policy *'Included Engaged and Involved: A Positive Approach to Managing School Exclusions'* and allow for further consultation to take place and feedback to the Education Committee on 19 June 2018.
- (ii) Note specifically the guiding principles, legislative context, exclusion procedures, procedures prior to exclusion and procedures for appeals against an exclusion.

## **5. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE POLICY**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of an updated policy on Religious Observance in Schools.

David Scott, Quality Improvement Officer, presented the report outlining the legislative background to the policy and advising Members that all schools would be expected to develop and publish their own statements of practice on religious observance based on the policy.

Councillor Dugdale asked if children had the right to withdraw from acts of religious observance within schools and what would be the process for this. Mr Scott explained that teachers would consider pupils' wishes in relation to religious observance and why a child did not want to participate.

Ms Robertson advised that there was a statutory provision to allow parents to withdraw their child from religious observance. While there was no similar power for children, she indicated that in certain circumstances, for example children with particular learning needs where it is difficult for the child to participate, alternative arrangements could be made.

### **Decision**

The Committee approved the updated Religious Observance Policy.

## **6. CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE – RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION IN NON-DENOMINATIONAL SCHOOLS AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of an updated policy regarding the provision of religious and moral education in non-denominational schools and religious education in Roman Catholic schools.

Mr Scott presented the report referring to the legislative background and advising Members that the policy also took account of recent national and local guidance on curriculum delivery.

Councillor Goodfellow asked about the teaching of other Faiths. Mr Scott advised that 'This is our Faith', based on the Curriculum for Excellence, informed the teaching of RE in all Roman Catholic schools in East Lothian and the revised policy provides guidance on enabling children to learn about the beliefs, values and practices of other faiths .

### **Decision**

The Committee approved the policy Curriculum for Excellence – Religious and Moral Education in Non-denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools.

## **7. SOUTH EAST IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to provide the Committee with an update on progress with the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC), to ask the Committee to approve the draft SEIC Plan and to note that the SEIC Plan had been submitted to the Chief Inspector, Education Scotland for comment and approval.

Ms Robertson presented the report outlining the background to the setting up of the SEIC and the progress made to date in preparing the draft SEIC Plan. She also summarised the feedback provided by the Chief Inspector (CI) regarding further data analysis, development of a workforce plan, the inclusion of early learning and childcare in the Plan and the challenges faced by the regional lead in managing the expectations of different local authorities.

Ms Robertson also referred to the CI's comments on the need for clarity around governance and decision-making processes in order not to impede progress and action in the development of the next steps of the Plan. She advised Members that this feedback had not been included in the report as it had only been received the previous week.

The Convener added that at the last SEIC meeting she had emphasised the need to bring back proposals for consideration by Members to ensure that the Council understood what it was signing up to. She said that while this approach may have been viewed as 'challenging', it was essential to ensure that local checks and balances were in place to maintain local governance of the Plan.

Councillor Gilbert asked about the interface between different Council IT systems and Ms Robertson advised that there had been no problems to date.

In response to questions from Councillor Mackie, Ms Robertson stated that one of the key challenges was representing the voice of staff in all schools and shaping the SEIC Plan to add value to local improvement plans. She said that there had been difficulties in arranging workstream group meeting dates at which all 5 local authorities could be present. She advised that the RICs would only take effect if the proposals for the Bill become law and should that occur, she would be keen to enhance support for East Lothian's schools and ensure that the necessary funding was available to access that support.

Councillor Small raised the question of the impact of the amount of staff time being spent on SEIC work and the decision-making arrangements within the group. Ms Robertson stated that staff were recording their hours and additional expenses to monitor the impact on the service. The Quality Improvement Manager's time supporting schools had been reduced by her involvement in the SEIC. Regarding priorities and direction of travel she said it was too early to assess the impact. She explained that she had requested a quorum be set for meetings and that she had taken the decision to withdraw her staff's involvement in any workstream that did not fit with East Lothian's priorities.

In reply to a question from Councillor Forrest, Ms Robertson said that as yet there had been no formal meetings with the Trade Unions on the workforce plan. She added that staff did not feel that they had been consulted on their membership of the SEIC. However, they were content for now to participate on the basis that it would add value but not incur any additional workload.

Councillor Dugdale asked about the impact on staff resources, especially if East Lothian is seen as having expertise in a particular area. Ms Robertson outlined some of the current costs in relation to staff time and indicated that these would likely increase. She added that although East Lothian was a small local authority it did not mean that it was not effective and would not be willing to share and build on the expertise it had created in specific areas.

In response to a question from Councillor Goodfellow, Ms Robertson advised that there was previous agreement between the Council and the Scottish Government to commit to the RIC. She did not see the Council withdrawing from the RIC but rather trying to influence the way forward to ensure that, as far as possible, it reflects East Lothian's own vision.

Replying to Councillor Williamson, Ms Robertson advised that the Council had created its own survey for staff as it didn't consider the version provided to be of a high enough quality.

Councillor Findlay was concerned that the Council may have policies foisted on it that did not reflect its own priorities for education. He asked, if the RICS were to become law, could the Council refuse to implement it. Ms Robertson advised that at present it was not clear what statutory duties may be placed on local authorities should the RICs become law. She added that this was why it was so important to maintain a robust approach and try to shape the SEIC Plan so that it supported and reflected East Lothian's priorities as far as possible.

Councillor Mackie referred to the concerns previously expressed by Conservative Members regarding the SEIC. However, she said that all Members should take comfort from the robust approach being taken by Ms Robertson and her staff to ensure that East Lothian's priorities were reflected in the decisions taken by the RIC and she encouraged the continuation of that approach.

Councillor Goodfellow declared the Council's support for officers in their robust approach to the SEIC.

The Convener concluded that the SEIC had to add value to the Council's own local improvement plan and to enhance proposals for support to schools. She referred to previous concerns expressed by teachers, parents and others and to meetings she

had arranged with other political parties. She reaffirmed the Committee's support for Ms Robertson to continue her robust approach.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the ongoing commitment to and progress with enhancing support for our schools through the South East Improvement Collaborative (SEIC);
- (ii) Approve the draft South East Improvement Collaborative plan on the premise that the SEIC added value to the East Lothian Education Service Local Improvement Plan and enhances the support to schools through engagement and collaboration;
- (iii) Note that following feedback from the Chief Inspector from Education Scotland the Plan will be brought back to the Education Committee.

*Sederunt: Elizabeth Malcolm left the meeting.*

## **8. HEAD TEACHER APPOINTMENTS**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to inform the Committee of the Head Teacher appointments made by the Appointments Sub-Committee.

The Convener invited Members to note the recent appointments.

### **Decision**

The Committee agreed to note the Head Teacher appointments.

*Sederunt: Councillor Dugdale and Councillor Goodfellow left the meeting.*

## **9. DEVELOPING THE YOUTH WORKFORCE**

A report was submitted by the Depute Chief Executive (Resources and People Services) to update the Committee on a range of recent developments and activities associated with Developing the Youth Workforce (DYW).

Neil Craik-Collins, Lead Officer – Curriculum and Estate Development, presented the report summarising the key themes of the Youth Employment Strategy and local implementation plan. He outlined a number of activities which were underway across the county and the range of organisations working in partnership with the Council to create opportunities for young people. Mr Craik-Collins also referred Members to the results of a recent assessment of partnership progress which was attached to the report.

Responding to questions from Members, Mr Craik-Collins provided further details of how the programme was creating pathways for all abilities, work to encourage young people to start businesses and the delivery of Gaelic education. He also outlined how events were publicised and information was disseminated to pupils and parents, and the feedback received from pupils involved in courses run via partners and in-house.

Alison Hood, Team Leader (Employability), advised Members that they were currently at a record high for positive destinations and that part of this was due to the good work undertaken with partner organisations.

Councillor Small commended the report and the enthusiasm shown by Mr Craik-Collins and Ms Hood. He observed that while the results would not happen overnight it was important that the Council continued to provide as much support as possible for this work.

Councillor Findlay agreed with his colleague and added that he was very encouraged by the development of business start-up opportunities for young people which would not only benefit those involved but also the wider economy of East Lothian.

The Convener added her thanks to Mr Craik-Collins and Ms Hood.

**Decision**

The Committee agreed to:

- (i) Note the range of developments and activities associated with Developing the Youth Workforce as outlined in the report.
- (ii) Note that work will remain ongoing with regular updates to our developing the Youth Workforce plans, engaging all partners in the planning process and to jointly celebrate and report more of our successes.

Signed

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Councillor Shamin Akhtar  
Convener of the Education Committee