

THE FIFE COUNCIL - EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – BLENDED MEETING

Committee Room 2, 5th Floor, Fife House, North Street, Glenrothes

14 November 2023

10.00 am - 1.25 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Kathleen Leslie (Convener), Lynn Ballantyne-Wardlaw, Patrick Browne, John Caffrey, James Calder (substituting for Councillor Aude Boubaker-Calder), Ian Cameron, Altany Craik (substituting for Councillor Colin Davidson), Dave Dempsey, Sean Dillon, Linda Erskine, Alycia Hayes, Louise Kennedy-Dalby, Sam Steele (substituting for Councillor Lynn Mowatt), Daniel Wilson; Alastair Crockett and Ian MacAulay, Religious Representative/Adviser.

ATTENDING: Maria Lloyd, Head of Education & Children's Services - Secondary Schools & Specialist Support, Angela Logue, Head of Education & Children's Services - Primary Schools & Improvement Support, Shelagh McLean, Head of Education & Children's Services - Early Years and Directorate Support, Deborah Davidson, Education Manager, Sarah Else, Education Manager, Jackie Funnell, Education Manager, Adam Brown, Depute Principal Psychologist (Strategy), Stuart Booker, Quality Improvement Officer and Zoe Thomson, Quality Improvement Officer, Education and Children's Services; Alison Binnie, Finance Business Partner and Diane Barnet, Committee Officer, Finance & Corporate Services.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillors Aude Boubaker-Calder, Colin Davidson and Lynn Mowatt.

60. CHANGE OF MEMBERSHIP

The committee noted that Councillor Alistair Suttie had replaced Councillor Naz Anis-Miah as a member of the committee.

61. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No 22.

62. MINUTE

The committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Education Scrutiny Committee of 18 September 2023.

Decision

The committee agreed to approve the minute.

63. RELATIONSHIPS & BEHAVIOUR IN SCHOOLS – UPDATE REPORT

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services providing updated details of the approaches adopted and the action plans developed to support school staff and pupils in reducing and addressing incidents of violence and aggression.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) reviewed and commented on the content of the report and the action plans; and
- (2) requested a further update on progress in approximately eight months' time - as part of the overall Health and Wellbeing Strategy Improvement Priority for 2023-26, set out in the Education and Children's Services Directorate Improvement Plan.

The committee adjourned at 11.27 am and reconvened at 11:41 am.

Mr Crockett joined the meeting prior to consideration of the following item and Councillor Craik re-entered the meeting during consideration of the following item.

64. REPORT ON PROGRESS ON NEURODEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT PATHWAY

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services providing an update on the Scottish Government funded Neurodevelopmental Assessment Pathway Test of Change (ToC). This project had been led by Education and supported by NHS Fife colleagues.

This ToC had been running since October 2021 in two West Fife secondary schools (Woodmill High School and St Columba's RC High School) and their associated cluster primary schools, as well as Calaiswood Special School. The pilot involved a move from multiple assessment pathways for different neurodevelopmental conditions (e.g., Autism, ADHD) to a single assessment pathway which allowed a range of potential conditions to be considered. The proposed advantages of having one referral route included:

- simplified process for families and professionals;
- allowed for the capture of information once rather than multiple referral routes;
- did not require parents/carers and education staff to guess whether a child had a neurodevelopmental condition and what that might be before referral; and
- allowed a range of conditions to be considered by specialist staff working together.

The report included the most up to date information relating to referral rates, as well as feedback from stakeholders including parents/carers and school staff on the pilot from November 2021 to July 2023.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised the progress made on the Test of Change;
- (2) agreed to support the proposed next steps; and
- (3) requested officers to develop a full proposal - for the consideration of the Cabinet Committee at a future date - relating to the funding of the roll-out of this new approach across Fife to supporting a single pathway for assessing children with suspected neurodevelopmental conditions.

65. ATTAINMENT IN THE BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services providing an update on current progress in improving attainment in the broad general education and closing the attainment gap across Fife's schools. This had been a key priority within the Education and Children's Services' Directorate Improvement Plan 2021-2023.

The broad general education begins in early learning and childcare and continues to the end of S3. This report provided details of improvement activities that were well under way to ensure sustained education recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, through increased universal or targeted support for children and young people. This included progress made in the use of the Attainment Scotland Fund (ASF), which encompassed the Strategic Equity Fund (Year 1), Pupil Equity Funding and the Care Experienced Children and Young People Fund to address the challenge of Closing the Poverty Related Attainment Gap and to support families by reducing the Cost of the School Day.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised and commented on current progress in improving attainment in the broad general education and the planned next steps to continue to support education recovery in Fife and close the attainment gap;
- (2) scrutinised and commented on the progress made by Fife's schools and teams in the use of the Attainment Scotland Fund to positively impact on the educational outcomes of children and young people and planned next steps for 23/24; and
- (3) agreed to seek updates on the impact of approaches and interventions on improving educational outcomes for children and young people locally, through individual schools and via Area Committee reports or workshops.

Councillor Ballantyne-Wardlaw left the meeting following consideration of the above item and Councillor Calder left the meeting during consideration of the following item.

66. SENIOR PHASE STAGE - BASED OUTCOMES

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services providing an update on current progress in improving outcomes in the senior phase of secondary schooling (stages S4 – S6).

The report provided an overview and brief commentary on the senior phase outcomes for Fife for 2023 for cohorts of learners and for specific groups of learners at this current time for SQA. This was in addition to an elected member briefing previously provided on 2023 SQA pre-appeal results issued on 8 August 2023. The report analysed these in relation to comparative data from session 2021-2022 and 2018-2019 when the exam arrangements were the same. Alternative arrangements for certification were in place during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 due to the Covid pandemic and data for these years did not provide a like for like comparison. The report also described the ongoing work in improving outcomes for learners in the Senior Phase of Secondary school.

The report also included information on sustained positive destinations for school leavers from data provided by Insight (the tool used by the Scottish Government to provide both local authorities and schools with up to date data) in May 2023 and on literacy and numeracy outcomes for levels 4 and 5 from session 2022/2023 versus the predictions as included in the report considered by this committee on 23 May 2023.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) scrutinised and commented on the senior phase outcomes for session 2022/2023 in the context of Fife data and national attainment trends;
- (2) scrutinised and commented on the literacy and numeracy approach with schools and the use of the Senior Phase Analytical Tool (SPAT);
- (3) scrutinised and commented on the sustained positive destinations for session 2021/2022 in the context of Fife data and national trends;
- (4) agreed to support next steps identified for session 2023/2024; and
- (5) agreed to encourage local elected members to meet with secondary head teachers to discuss their individual school's 2022/2023 outcomes for senior pupils and their approaches to improving attainment.

67. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE – P1 DEFERRAL DATA

The committee considered a report by the Head of Education and Children's Services providing updated details of the impact of the Scottish Government legislation to extend the automatic right to receive an additional year of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to all children eligible to defer entry into Primary 1, providing details of those children accessing a deferred year of Early Learning and Childcare during session 2023/2024.

Decision

The committee noted the information regarding children accessing a deferred year of Early Learning and Childcare during session 2023/2024.

68. EDUCATION SERVICE REVENUE BUDGET 2023-24 PROJECTED OUTTURN

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education and Children's Services (Early Years and Directorate Support) and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services providing an update on the forecast financial position for the 2023/2024 financial year, for the areas in scope of the Education Scrutiny Committee.

Decision

The committee:-

- (1) considered the current financial performance and activity as detailed in the report;
- (2) noted the projected outturn position and the relevant areas of projected over and under spend within the service; and
- (3) noted that a further update would be available for its consideration at the next meeting on 9 January 2024.

69. EDUCATION SERVICE CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN 2023-24 : PROGRESS REPORT

The committee considered a joint report by the Head of Education and Children's Services (Early Years and Directorate Support) and the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services providing information on the overall progress of the Education Service capital programme for the current financial year, 2023-24, as well as informing of progress on major projects.

Decision

The committee noted:-

- (1) the financial position as detailed in the report,
- (2) that the budget had been revised to reflect the outcome of the Capital Plan review and the annual re-phasing exercise undertaken in June 2023; and
- (3) noted that a further update would be available for its consideration at the next meeting on 9 January 2024.

70. EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

The committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services supporting the committee's consideration of the workplan for future meetings of the committee.

Decision

The committee reviewed the workplan and suggestions were invited from members of the committee for future areas of scrutiny.