

Executive Director for Communities and Families Update

Update for Parent Council Neighbourhood Groups – May 2018

Introduction

We know the financial challenges beyond remain considerable as the Council's programme of transformation continues and further savings are to be made. The budget for the 2018-19 has been agreed following consultation with Edinburgh's citizens. Key areas for investment were identified and for schools this means:

- Additional funding for investment in school buildings
- An extra £415k to support children with additional support needs including the Holiday Activity Programme for Disabled Children
- Funding to allow current library hours to be maintained
- An increase in the level of grant for school uniforms to bring Edinburgh to the Scottish average
- An extra £1.5m for looked after children and young people

I know our staff are well-equipped to deal with this challenge though I do not underestimate the demands being placed upon both them and our resources. I will continue to support everyone as best as I can as we strive to continue delivering high quality services to our children and young people.

Sub-Committee on Standards for Children and Families

We recently had the Sub-Committee on Standards for Children and Families, this gives elected members the opportunity to look at the quality of education and care experiences for young people in Edinburgh by scrutinising the reports and follow up actions of Education Scotland inspections in schools. The following schools were considered:

Tynecastle High School – The inspection report identified leadership of change at the school is good; learning, teaching and assessment satisfactory; ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion is good, and raising attainment and achievement satisfactory.

[Tynecastle High School - Inspection Report](#)

Victoria Primary – Key strengths identified include staff commitment to undertake aspects of leadership; involvement of the school within the community and well behaved and polite children. A 3-year action plan has been developed, and progress already made with the whole staff review of quality assurance calendar; a rolling log for improvement, and staff training on the new standardised assessments.

[Victoria Primary School - Inspection Report](#)

Hermitage Park Primary – Strengths at this school are the head-teacher's well-judged leadership of change; the supportive learning environment provided by

teachers, and the skilled team of practitioners in the nursery class. Good progress has been made with the subsequent action plan.

[Hermitage Park Primary School - Inspection Report](#)

Holiday Activity Programme for Disabled Children

The programme (usually known as the “playscheme”) works with disabled children with complex and diverse care needs providing care during the school holidays. The contract for this was awarded to the organisation FABB from October 2017 last year.

Following the change of provider, a number of issues were raised by parents including the amount of provision available per child, and quality of the provision during to the October week. A parental deputation to the Education, Children and Families Committee in October led to the formation of a member/officer group which met with parents to discuss the way forward. One outcome of this has been an increase in budget to assist the council to raise the level of provision.

Staff worked closely with FABB to support the running of the programme, but due to the ongoing management difficulties of the provider, the council took over managerial responsibility for the provision in February 2017, with staff recruitment still undertaken by FABB under the existing contract. The council has now ended the contract with FABB and is in negotiation with another provider to undertake recruitment in the short term for our summer holiday provision.

The October, February and Easter Holiday Programme have all been delivered but have run below capacity, partly due to the management difficulties, but mainly due to the difficulty experienced in recruiting the high numbers of staff required. Due to the seasonal nature of the work, staff are employed on short term contracts, they are mainly students, and current indications are that there is a shortage of labour supply in the market for this type of work. The council is investigating all options to increase recruitment, including direct approaches to colleges and universities. The aim is to extend provision for up to 6 weeks for children but under current conditions we have not been able to provide 4 weeks to all families who wanted it. We are holding a waiting list of 60-70 families who have not received a service since summer last year. We understand that this is a vital service for families and are aiming to increase capacity for the summer provision, dependent on recruitment of sufficient staff and the ratios required for children attending.

South West School Review

The informal consultation on the future of the school’s estate in the West and South West of Edinburgh has come to a close. This is just the first step in looking at the future for schools in the area in order to plan for rising rolls and provide modern facilities for young people. Officers and politicians asked communities for their opinions on the published proposal detailed below, the alternative options were identified as a result of community engagement:

Options:

<p>Option 1 – Published Proposal</p> <p>2 New Schools</p> <p>Capital Cost - £110.5m</p>	<p>New South West Edinburgh HS - Merger of Currie and WHEC on a single site with Woodlands</p> <p>Balerno HS expand to accommodate Currie PS</p> <p>Sighthill realigned to Forrester</p> <p>New West Edinburgh HS – Ratho, Kirkliston, Hillwood and new Maybury PS</p>
<p>Alternative Option 1</p> <p>1 New School</p> <p>Capital Cost - £81m</p>	<p>Currie and Balerno expand</p> <p>No Change to WHEC</p> <p>New West Edinburgh HS - Kirkliston, Hillwood and new Maybury PS</p>
<p>Alternative Option 2</p> <p>3 New Schools</p> <p>Capital Cost - £127m</p>	<p>New South West Edinburgh HS – WHEC feeders and Juniper Green</p> <p>Currie reduces, Balerno expands</p> <p>New West Edinburgh HS – Kirkliston and Hillwood</p> <p>2nd New West Edinburgh HS – Maybury and any future PS which may emerge from housing developments</p>
<p>Alternative Option 3</p> <p>2 New Schools</p> <p>Capital Cost – £105.5m</p>	<p>WHEC to be used as community hub</p> <p>WHEC feeders divided between Currie and Forrester</p> <p>Currie expands to 1600, site to be identified.</p> <p>New West Edinburgh HS - Kirkliston, Hillwood and new Maybury PS</p>

Next steps...

Elected members will consider all the views expressed during the informal consultation process and the deputations. A report on any final proposals will be presented to the EC&F on the 22 May 2018 in the form of a draft statutory consultation paper.

Rights Respecting Schools Silver Award

I am delighted that Firrhill has been accredited with the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Silver which is the second stage of the Rights Respecting Schools Award. They are the first school in the UK to have achieved Silver under the new UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools criteria. The award recognises good progress towards embedding children's rights in the school's policy, practice and ethos. Firrhill are continuing to make progress, learning about rights in natural ways across the curriculum, through training, assemblies and focused events.

Our young people are developing as rights respecting citizens, as well as modelling rights respecting attitudes. The visiting assessors praised the warm welcome they received from staff, parent council and, in particular, pupils. I would like to extend a huge thank you to the staff and pupil RRS working groups, who have committed a great deal of time each week to ensuring our school continues to develop positive relationships, encourage an ethos of respecting the rights of all within Firrhill, and promoting the principles of dignity, participation, fairness and equality for everyone.

Schools WiFi update

Since the upgrade of the Wi-Fi technologies there have been a number of service related issues and poor coverage. This has had a direct impact on Schools ability to connect multiple different devices to the network and therefore can impact on the student's education. A service improvement plan was implemented to deal with the poor coverage issues. This involved surveying 79 sites and if appropriate the Wi-Fi access point was repositioned or in some cases additional Wi-Fi access points were installed.

The Council's ICT partner, CGI, were expected to have completed all the WiFi remediation work by June 2018 and progress of this would be tracked carefully by the Council's ICT service. Given concerns that Council has previously expressed about CGI's delivery of ICT change projects, including the WiFi upgrade, these issues have been formally escalated and are reviewed by the Council and CGI during the weekly executive review meetings. A further progress report will be considered at the Education, Children and Families Committee in due course.

Para Sport Festival

The seventh annual Para Sport Festival took place at Forrester / St Augustine's School Campus, Edinburgh on Friday 23rd March, attracting 81 school aged pupils with a physical or sensory impairment from across the East of Scotland to register for the event. The festival, which is supported by the Celtic Foundation, aims to provide a platform for young people from the mainstream education environment an opportunity to access sports delivered by experienced coaches while also raising awareness in Para Sport.

Gaelic

The [Gaelic Language Plan](#) will be considered by the Corporate Policy and Strategy Committee on 15 May. The report contains detail on the Councils plans to develop Gaelic and Gaelic Medium Education in the city. It is a statutory duty on the Council to produce a plan every 5 years, this is the second plan of its kind and builds on the progress of the first which was produced in 2012.

The 2018-22 plan aims to support progress across the wider agenda, including the workplace, culture, arts and heritage and economy. It also seeks to address the challenges of increasing demand for GME and GLE across the city and teacher recruitment and retention.

Exams

As I'm sure you're all aware, it's that time of year again. Our best wishes are with all pupils currently sitting their exams. We want all our young people to have as many options as possible for future education paths and I know how important getting good results now is.

I would like to thank all pupils and staff for the enormous amount of time and energy invested in preparing for exams. We would also like to thank parents who will no doubt have been providing endless encouragement. Edinburgh has consistently achieved some great results and it would be fantastic to see this success continue in 2018.

Alistair Gaw

Executive Director for Communities and Families

May 2018