

Education, Children and Families Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 10th December 2019

Update on the Wester Hailes Education Centre Working Group

Executive
Ward - Pentland Hills
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 note the work ongoing by the working group to improve outcomes for pupils attending Wester Hailes Education Centre.
 - 1.1.2 note a further update will be provided following agreement of the Council Budget on 20th February 2020.

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Update on the Wester Hailes Education Centre Working Group

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Wester Hailes Working Group have agreed actions aimed at improving educational and other opportunities for young people in the area.

3. Background

- 3.1 In looking at solutions to address rising rolls, informal consultation took place in the South-West of the City to examine options to amalgamate, rebuild and extend secondary schools.
- 3.2 In June 2018, following extensive consultation, the Education, Children and Families Committee took the decision to maintain the schools in their current communities.
- 3.3 During the consultation, staff and parents from the WHEC feeder primaries presented their views on the importance of maximising educational and other opportunities for young people in the area. In recognition of this, it was agreed to set up a working group tasked with developing a long-term plan for education in the Wester Hailes community, including but not limited to:
- research to understand the decisions parents and young people make about placing choices
 - dealing with reputation and communication issues
 - strengthening the curriculum offer
 - strengthening the partnership with feeder primaries and nearby high schools
 - consideration of options for a 're-brand' of WHEC in response to concerns raised by some of the parents at the feeder schools, and to explore the feasibility of introducing a specialism in its curriculum such as a focus on Digital & IT skills and/or vocational skills, encouraging placement requests to come in, for those wishing to develop these skills for employment or further education.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The group, consisting of parents and teachers from WHEC and its feeder primaries, as well as appropriate council officers and elected members, have met six times.
- 4.2 At the first meeting, it was agreed to undertake research into why parents in the WHEC catchment area choose to send their children to other schools. Based on the results, the group was able to examine any areas of concerns as well as build on existing strengths. The following has since been progressed;
- 4.3 The group agreed that the shared leisure and school sports facilities required upgrading. The design team have since prepared initial proposals and costs for a staged investment approach. This will initially focus on provision of an all-weather sports pitch and refurbishment and reorganisation of the PE and community building. Any investment will be subject to approval of funding in the Council Budget which will be agreed on 20th February 2020.
- 4.4 The school is currently in the process of being rebranded and renamed. With engagement in the community highlighting stigma surrounding the term “Education Centre”, new names were suggested and put to a community vote. The clear winner emerged as Wester Hailes High School to allow parity with other schools in the City but still retaining the link to the local area. The Cluster are working together to agree shared values to accompany the rebrand and design a new crest featuring each feeder school.
- 4.5 The group agreed that the area would benefit from strengthened community links through increased cluster activity. Collaboration between the schools such as joint events with pupil councils and sports days are planned to ease transition of pupils to WHEC. A Development Officer for Creative and Innovative Technologies has been appointed in WHEC. One of the workstreams will be to work alongside primary staff to increase capacity for digital learning across the cluster. Opportunities are being examined to tie a specialism to the school, such as IT, to link with the City Deal and provide the qualifications required for future employment opportunities.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Investment in the school and leisure facilities will progress subject to the approval of funding within the Council Budget which will be agreed in February 2020.
- 5.2 The group continue to meet, and the actions as described in section 4 will be progressed. An update will be provided to the Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2020.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 Any investment in the school and leisure facilities will progress subject to the approval of funding within the Council Budget which will be agreed in February 2020.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The working group consists of members of the parent councils from affected schools in Wester Hailes. The school communities were consulted on any improvements they would like, or strengths built upon before any actions were agreed.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [Report](#) submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee on 14 August 2018 to agree the membership and remit of the group.

9. Appendices

None