

## **Note of meeting**

### **Consultative Committee with Parents**

**6.00pm, Thursday 7 October 2021**

### **Virtual Meeting - via Microsoft Teams**

#### **Present**

##### **Elected Members**

Councillor Perry (Convenor), Councillor Mary Campbell, Councillor Laidlaw and Councillor Louise Young.

##### **Parent Representatives**

Alex Ramage (Education Children & Families Committee Parent Representative)

Billy Samuel

Sandy Bennett Haber

Katie Bennett

Kate Morris

Sarah Scott

Naomi Barton

Kevin Kealey

##### **External Officer Representatives**

Marion Healey Smith (Connect)

##### **Council Officers in Attendance**

Jack Simpson, Senior Education Officer

David Bruce, Senior Education Manager

Arran Findlay, Senior Education Officer

Lynn Patterson, Senior Education Manger for Early Years and Primary

Anna Gray, Quality Improvement Manager

Lorna French, Acting Head of Schools and Lifelong Learning

Natalie Le Couteur, Committee Services

Amanda Hatton–Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

Crawford McGhie- Senior Manager for Estates and Operational support

Gillian Kennedy- Service Policy Advisor

Jackie Reid- Acting Senior Education Manager- Secondary

## **Apologies**

Councillor Dickie  
Councillor Laidlaw

### **1. Vote of Thanks**

Councillor Ian Perry wished to extend his gratitude to Julien Kramer, the outgoing Interim Executive Director for Education and Children's Services, for his work with the City of Edinburgh Council, and to extend a welcome to Amanda Hatton as the newly appointed Executive Director of Education and Children's Services, alongside Marion Healey Smith, as the Connect Representative joining the Consultative Committee with Parents.

### **2. Note of Meeting**

#### **Decision**

To approve the note of Meeting of the Consultative Committee with Parents (CCWP) of 7 October 2021.

### **3. Director's Update**

Amanda Hatton had joined the City of Edinburgh Council five weeks prior as the newly appointed Executive Director for Education and Children's Services and placed thanks on record to the outgoing Interim Director of Education and Children's Services of whom she had worked with for the past month as part of a handover arrangements.

Attainment and narrowing the gap were the key areas of focus for the Director through raising aspirations and working collaboratively.

The initial observations for the Director was that there was a clear strategic direction in the city regarding poverty proofing and sustainability and that there was impressive anti-poverty and wellbeing work underway, alongside scope to respond to challenges faced.

The Director advised that Parents were welcome to contact her, and that she favoured an open dialogue to addressing issues.

#### **Decision.**

To note the update.

### **4. Education, Children and Families Committee Report Update**

The pressures faced by headteachers was highlighted, with regard to overcoming staff absence challenges as a result of Coronavirus and the challenges of working in schools at this time of year with both pupils and teachers experiencing fatigue, which was typical at this stage in the school term. Headteachers were particularly keen that this message of challenges in schools was relayed to parents, to foster an understanding of the challenging framework in schools.

The Education, Children and Families Committee would convene on 7 December 2021 and the following reports were highlighted as being noteworthy for all parents:

- The impact of Covid on parental engagement, an integrated impact assessment would take place to review this matter.
- An early years update which was looking at the delivery of the 1140 hours, The parent and staff survey had indicated this had been successful and there would be a review of the quality of early years, and a subsequent report to a later meeting of the Education, Children and Families Committee.
- Training, workforce and curriculum would be the vehicles used to respond to the Council's equalities agenda.
- The Learning together report.
- Changes in the methodology to accreditation, as part of the national plans to reform this, and the Council's role in responding to a consultation on this.
- The role played by Active Schools in delivery of extracurricular activities.  
Resumption of clubs and recruitment of volunteers.

It was highlighted that parental engagement was about building a community and parents gave recognition that Covid had led to a lack of engagement due to requirements for social distancing. A plea was made by parents that consideration was given to proportional and safe ways for parents to be involved in their children's learning, to counter some of the negative elements where parent populations had felt disengaged from their child's learning, particularly due to restrictions on parents entering the school building due to Coronavirus.

## **Decision**

- 1) To give consideration to how parents could be welcomed back into schools and re-engaged in their child's learning, under the auspices of the Scottish Government Guidance.
- 2) To otherwise note the update.

## **5. Active Schools**

The matter of active schools had been a routine segment of the CCWP agenda due to parental interest and interruption to active schools due to Coronavirus. Parents were keen to see a resumption of activity under active schools, however there were new considerations which meant that ambitions to resume pre pandemic levels of active school activity, would take place incrementally, as some of the challenges to this resumption of activity persisted.

There would be a report presented to the Education, Children and Families Committee concerning active schools on 7 December 2021. The discussion on this matter focussed on:

- The ambitions of delivering active schools, particularly around the availability of schools to open and administrative burdens faced by volunteers.
- A recognition that due to workforce pressures, this was a limiting factor in schools' ability to run clubs.

- That the capacity of teachers to take on additional responsibilities of running a club, while circumstances were pressured in schools, was a limiting factor in the resumption of active schools.
- That the Council's business support team was now processing lets for schools after 6pm at night and at the weekends, which was a changed position from previously all lets in schools not being permitted and this was hoped would lend strength to the resumption of active schools.
- That an information briefing for parent councils would be produced to demonstrate what work was required to restart clubs and active schools.
- That work was required to understand what the barriers were to resuming the pre pandemic volume of active schools.
- To note that Sports Scotland had requested that the Council amended their approach to charging and to note that arrangements in Edinburgh differed to other local authorities which had led to some activity under the active schools banner being charged for. The new arrangements where this charging was no longer possible had led to significant changes in how active schools was organised in Edinburgh.
- That parents felt an integrated impact assessment was required given the level of the change which had taken place with Active Schools in Edinburgh.
- To note that parent volunteers had found the new landscape to active schools challenging, particularly where there were new administration burdens associated with taking payment for activity.

## **Decision**

To note that the information briefing for parent councils would be shared with parent councils.

## **6. Update on Comparative summary funding for Special Needs in Edinburgh**

Following concerns highlighted by parents at the October 2021 meeting of the CCWP, it was agreed that an up-to-date comparative summary of funding for Special Needs in Edinburgh item was brought forward to evidence and inform a discussion and alleviate parental concerns that per capita spend was lower than other local authorities, following reporting by the BBC on this issue.

When the City of Edinburgh Council had reviewed this matter, the data variances were discovered and it was understood that the BBC's reporting on funding per capita was not as low as reported, when additional funding streams were considered in the per capita spend.

The figure when clarified with the Scottish Government led to an understanding that per capita spend was £3,606 in Edinburgh, which was the median point of expenditure when compared with other Scottish Local Authorities.

Some factors were highlighted where spend may not equate to an enhanced level of provision, particularly as some authorities may have a higher per capita spend, however other authorities may have overall better packages of support in place, albeit the overall spend was lower, therefore the per capita figure was a crude measure of the quality of support in place.

In Edinburgh, the authority had 7.25% of the pupil population in Scotland and the Council had 9.35% of the ASN pupil population in Scotland. When compared with other authorities who had fewer ASN pupils, their ASN spending figure would represent a higher number, against a lower number of students.

The breadth of top ASN needs was also shared with the CCWP.

References – Appendix 1

## **Decision**

To note the update.

## **7. Citywide Special Schools**

Parents were advised they would have scope to input to the report which would be considered by the Education, Children and Families committee on 7 December 2021 however with regret this planned consultation had not occurred and parents were concerned that the report had not yet been made available. It was advised that the report had been published that day and that parents were welcome to make comments on the report directly to the Convenor Councillor Ian Perry with feedback, prior to committee considering the report.

Parents were reporting delays to receiving a section 23 (Social work) assessments for their child which has led to longer periods of families being unsupported. It was agreed that this matter would be considered, and an update provided.

## **Decision**

- 1) To agree that Katy Bennet, representative of the special schools, would highlight to Councillor Ian Perry anything from the report which parents did not agree with, prior to the report being considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2021.
- 2) To agree to provide an update to Katy Bennet regarding section 23 assessment delays.

## **8. Locality Update**

The topics considered were:

- Placement appeals process;
- Scottish Government consultation on accreditation;
- Play approach for Edinburgh Learns;

- Covid Impact on Staff and the Scottish Government Coronavirus Guidance framework.

Ongoing concerns regarding parental engagement was highlighted, and agreed that the Executive Director would be considering.

Gaelic Medium Education was highlighted, and it was understood that this matter would be considered by the Education, Children and Families Committee in January 2022. It was advised that there was a pressing need to resolve the forward arrangements for Gaelic Medium Education (GME) in Edinburgh, due to rising rolls pressure at James Gillespie's High School where GME was currently located and the possibility of the timescale slipping. There would be a need to identify contingency arrangements for the period when there would be a lack of accommodation relative to the pupil numbers. The detail of funding arrangements for Gaelic was welcomed and further detail was requested particularly around funding for physical assets at Darroch. Informal engagement with parent councils would be taking place in December 2021 in the preceding period to the Statutory Consultation.

### **Decision**

- 1) To note that Parental Engagement would be an ongoing consideration by the Executive Director of Education and Children's Services.
- 2) To note that the informal consultation with parents within GME would address questions concerning funding arrangements, contingency accommodation arrangements and

## **9. Connect**

Marion Healey Smith from Connect shared the following update:

- Training Associate Diane Delaney had joined Connect;
- Connect continued to deliver member information sessions, via website during 2021 and more were planned for 2022;
- An AGM took place on 18 November 2021 on Mental Health in young people, available via the Connect website;
- Partnerships with Scottish Government on the equity and equity toolkit and sessions were continuing into 2022, as a helpful resource for parents;
- Three surveys had been issued, highlighting negative and positive elements for parents – negatives elements were particularly around parental consultations and Covid guidance. The report would be published in December 2021.
- Education Survey had been issued by Connect in response to the Ken Muir review.
- Early Years Survey had been issued by Connect.
- Survey result reports would be published by Connect in December 2021, via the website.
- UNCRC – continuing to press government on this.
- The Connect closed Facebook group was available to all parents, as a helpful site for parents for sharing ideas and information.

## **Decision**

To note the update.

### **9. National Parent Forum**

Naomi Barton shared the following update on behalf of the National Parent Forum:

- Dialogue was ongoing with Scottish Government.
- Scottish Government were working with the National Parent Forum on voting for children aged 16 plus.
- Damien Hayes was standing down from his role with the National Parent Forum and there was a vacancy for an Edinburgh parent to take up this position.

## **Decision**

To note the update

### **10. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 24 February 2022 at 6pm via Microsoft Teams.