GLASGOW CITY REGION EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Item 1
5th March 2024

Minutes of meeting held on 21st November 2023 by video conference.

Present: Councillor Angela Campbell (Chair), North Lanarkshire Council; Councillor Andrew Anderson, East Renfrewshire Council; Councillor Christina Cannon, Glasgow City Council; and Councillor Emma Rodden, Renfrewshire Council.

Apology: Pamela Di Nardo, Education Scotland.

Attending: Tony O'Neill (Clerk); Annamarie Conway, East Dunbartonshire Council; Mark Ratter, East Renfrewshire Council; Douglas Hutchison and Lorna Goldie, Glasgow City Council; Ruth Binks, Inverclyde Council; Janie O'Neill, North Lanarkshire Council; Gerry Lyons, Renfrewshire Council; Carole McKenzie, South Lanarkshire Council; Laura Mason, West Dunbartonshire Council; James Bowness and Sharon Hayward, West Partnership; Alan Taylor, Head Teacher co-opted representative; Michael Halbert, Education Scotland; Professor Chris Chapman, University of Glasgow.

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

1 There was submitted and approved the minutes of 12th September 2023.

West Partnership – Finance update 2023/24 – Position noted.

2 There was submitted a report by the Head of Resources, Education Services, Glasgow City Council, providing an update on the West Partnership's financial position for financial year 2023/24, advising

(1) that the grant award letter had been received on 29th June 2023 detailing the award of £1,515,500 for the financial year 2023/24;

(2) that the financial sub-group was due to meet again to discuss the budget for 2023/24 and to clarify the process for claims to streamline that process;

(3) of budget approvals for 2023/24 against each workstream, as detailed in the report; and

(4) of the 2023/24 budget, expenditure to date and forecast spend, as detailed in the report.

After consideration and having heard Lorna Goldie, Head of Resources, Education Services, Glasgow City Council, the committee noted the claim that had been made in August 2023 and the budget and forecast expenditure for 2023/24.

West Partnership – Progress update August to October 2023 noted.

3 There was submitted a report by the Data and Information Officer, East Renfrewshire Council, summarising the key messages from the West Partnership (WP) highlight report, as detailed in appendix 1 to the report and covered the reporting period from August to October 2023, advising that

(1) the progress update came approximately 2 months after the commencement of the academic session and was an early indication of progress towards workstream outcomes and demonstrated the progress of the transitions between lead officers in those workstreams and the strong work undertaken to ensure continuity in those areas of activity;

(2) as of 20th October 2023, the WP had received over 1200 evaluation responses to activity undertaken between August and October 2023 and had provided feedback to workstreams on the perceived impact of those activities;

(3) from those submissions, 87% of respondents had reported an improvement in knowledge/understanding and/or confidence relating to the topic of individual sessions, which had suggested that early activity in this session was meeting practitioner needs and progressing towards enhancing practitioner knowledge, understanding and confidence;

(4) from all evaluations, 84% of respondents had suggested that they had improved their knowledge and understanding of the area covered within the activity and from 825 evaluation responses where changes in confidence had been measured, 78% of respondents had noted an increase;

(5) qualitative evidence from each workstream, detailed further in appendix 1 to the report, had suggested that activities so far had provided opportunities for collaboration, raised knowledge and confidence, and began a process of information cascading within establishments and authorities;

(6) where appropriate, evaluations had asked respondents to reveal whether they believed what they had learned in the session could be put into practice within their settings, and from 825 responses, 82% had suggested that they could alter their practice because of learning gained from participating in the WP activity;

(7) all 3 workstreams were making progress towards their outcomes and where it was too early to evaluate progress towards outcomes, clear strategies to monitor progress had been implemented; and

(8) a small number of slippages and risks had been identified and solutions had been noted for each workstream.

After consideration and having heard Dr James Bowness, Data and Information Officer, East Renfrewshire Council, the committee noted the

(a) progress of the West Partnership in relation to the 3 drivers for improvement; and

(b) progress of each workstream's programmes for the period from August to October 2023.

West Partnership Artificial Intelligence scoping review in Education – Position noted.

4 There was submitted a report by Alex Evans, Research Officer, West Partnership regarding an update in relation to the work undertaken to develop an Artificial Intelligence (AI) scoping review, toolkit, and proposal for professional learning, advising

(1) of a summary of the key findings from the AI scoping review, its potential use in education, and the risks that had to be considered when using this technology, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;

(2) that from July to September 2023, 2 researchers had confucted a scoping review of the literature base on AI and eduation and after reviewing 33 journal articels, reports, and journalistic pieces, a thematic analysis of the findings had taken place, with the themes prodiced from this forming the structure of the report;

(3) of the key points that had been identified from the scoping review;

(4) of an AI Toolkit that was currently under development, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, which was targeted towards practitioners and provided a number of evaluative statements based on the key areas of the review, to enable readers to reflect on how this technology could be applied in their own classroom setting, whilst also providing a number of challenge questions to assess practitioners' level of understanding; and

(5) that to support practitioners' understanding and confidence with AI further, a proposal for professional learning was also under development and this paper, as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, outlined the importance of AI literacy for both practitioners and pupils, as well as key areas that those opportunities might focus on, including the skills necessary for using AI efficiently, how those applications could be applied in educational settings, and the challenges and risks that required to be considered.

After consideration and having heard a presentation from Alex Evans, Research Officer, West Partnership, the committee noted the findings from the Artificial Intelligence in education and the AI toolkit and proposal for professional learning.

Robert Owen Centre – West Partnership draft evaluation reports noted etc.

5 There was submitted a report by Professor Chris Chapman, University of Glasgow, Robert Owen Centre for Educational Change (ROC) regarding 3 draft ROC West Partnership (WP) evaluation reports, namely, the substantive evaluation report, External Evaluation Report prepared for the WP Regional Improvement Collaborative, September 2023 and 2 further complementary reports, an Executive Summary and Summary of Findings from Phase 3 of the ROC, advising

(1) of the background to the 3 reports;

(2) of the 3 key themes emerging from the reports, the first of which was the recovery context, which provided a background to the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on both practitioners and children and young people (CYP), which had informed the second key theme on demonstrating impacts from practitioner engagement in WP professional learning within and across schools and providing insights into definitions and criteria of impact from the perspectives of the key WP stakeholders, whilst the third and final key theme had provided similar insights on definitions and criteria, from the same stakeholders, but had focused on impacts beyond the school, all as detailed in the report;

(3) that progress was not uniform across WP, with such developments taking time, particularly given the challenges that schools and local authorities (LAs) were currently experiencing, which were major disruptive factors affecting all systems change and educational improvement efforts;

(4) that continued improved partnership working facilitated by the WP had supported the mobilisation of knowledge and expertise and had created networks that were informing and enhancing practice in the classroom and that this mobilisation of expertise was promoting systems change within and across the LAs;

(5) that the WP had made substantial progress regarding impact of the WP objectives at school and classroom level which had been enabled by an increased practitioner awareness of, and engagement with, WP professional learning programmes and resources and that had had positive impacts on CYP`s experiences, achievements and attainment, in addition to adding value through promoting systems change within and across the LAs; and

(6) that upon approval and sign-off, it was proposed to launch and publicise the ROC - WP External Evaluation Reports through a range of media and networks.

After consideration and having heard Professor Chris Chapman, University of Glasgow, the committee noted

(a) the 3 draft Robert Owen Centre – West Partnership external evaluation reports; and

(b) the proposed next steps.

Scottish Government Review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives – Verbal update noted etc.

6 With reference to the minutes of 12th September 2023 noting an update regarding the Scottish Government (SG) Review of Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs), the committee noted a further verbal update on progress of the review by Mark Ratter, Regional Lead Officer, highlighting

(1) that all 4 elements of the review had now been completed and the West Partnership (WP) had been well represented in the focus groups by local authority colleagues and, in addition, Professor Chapman, Robert Owen Centre (ROC) had also been part of one of the focus groups;

(2) that initial feedback from SG via the clarification meeting had highlighted a number of areas including:

(a) the scale of the WP benefits - Improving Our Classrooms, West Online School;

(b) the ownership and belief and sense of teacher agency; and

(c) the positive links with the ROC;

(3) that more broadly, additional feedback from SG had mirrored those themes and highlighted that

(a) RICs had continued to strengthen their support to pupils and practitioners, deepen collaboration within their regions and across the system, and ensure that regional resources and supports were prioritised by robust evaluation of the needs of pupils and practitioners;

(b) RICs had robust processes in place to evaluate their work; and

(c) RIC supports were evaluated strongly by participating practitioners, and that regional programmes and supports had continued to evolve in response to identified needs and circumstance, including current regional focus on absence, on strengthening support for learning, teaching and assessment, and on the provision of more cohort and session-long supports to deepen and embed learning for practitioners and pupils;

(4) that overall, the review had made it clear that RICs were engaging with approximately 30% of schools whilst accounting for 0.1% of education spending in Scotland;

(5) that the SG had not yet provided a timeline for when the final report would be published;

(6) the statement to the Scottish Parliament on 7th November 2023 when the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills had indicated that it had been decided, in light of the review, that the funding for RICs would be tapered, repurposing this funding to better support teachers in our classrooms, whilst the plans around the Centre for Teaching Excellence were not yet clear, however, funding for the RICs would reduce in 2024/25 and then stop;

(7) that given the significant impact that RICs, and the WP in particular, made for learners and practitioners this was very disappointing, and whilst at this stage, there was no additional detail about what the reduced funding would look like in 2024/25, an update would be provided to Committee when further information was available; and

(8) that at this stage, a range of scenarios were being explored and the SG had been asked for an early decision on the RIC funding for 2024/25.

After consideration, the committee

(i) thanked Mark for the update; and

(ii) noted

(A) Members' concerns around the uncertainty of 2024/25 RIC funding; and

(B) that a further progress update would be provided to the next meeting in March 2024.

Date of next meeting noted.

7 The committee noted that the next meeting would take place on Tuesday, 5th March 2024 at 1030 hours.