GLASGOW CITY REGION EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

Item 2
25th June 2024

Minutes of meeting held on 5th March 2024 by video conference.

Present: Councillor Angela Campbell (Chair), North Lanarkshire Council; Councillor Clare Steel, East Dunbartonshire Council; Councillor Andrew Anderson, East Renfrewshire Council; Councillor Christina Cannon, Glasgow City Council; Councillor Jim Clocherty, Inverclyde Council; Councillor Emma Rodden, Renfrewshire Council; and Councillor Lynda Williamson, West Dunbartonshire Council.

Apology: Ruth Binks, Inverclyde Council.

Attending: Tony O'Neill (Clerk); Greg Bremner, East Dunbartonshire Council; Mark Ratter, East Renfrewshire Council; Douglas Hutchison and Lynne Turner, Glasgow City Council; Michael Roach, Inverclyde Council (substitute for Ruth Binks); Janie O'Neill, Renfrewshire Council; Laura Mason, West Dunbartonshire Council; James Bowness, Sharon Hayward and Liz McTiernan, West Partnership; Alan Taylor, Head Teacher co-opted representative; and Pamela Di Nardo and David Gregory, Education Scotland.

Minutes of previous meeting approved.

1 There was submitted and approved the minutes of 21st November 2023.

Education Scotland – Restructure and Support Delivery Model 2024 - Presentation noted etc.

2 There was submitted a report by the Senior Regional Advisor, Education Scotland regarding the emerging changes within that national agency, advising

(1) that in April 2019 Education Scotland had established a Regional Directorate within its organisational structure with 6 Regional Improvement Teams (RITs) to complement the structure of Scotland's 6 Regional Improvement Collaboratives (RICs) and that to date these multi-disciplinary RITs had worked alongside local authorities and RICs to support improvement priorities outlined within regional and local plans and that through the regional structure, local improvement support had been coordinated and delivered through the associated RIC groupings of local authorities, which varied in size, scale and support requirement;

(2) that as an executive agency of Scottish Government, a recent review and update of Education Scotland's delivery priorities had been undertaken and whilst Education Scotland's principle aim was driving improvements in education, in partnership with local partners, how the agency would strategically and operationally deliver support, alongside local authorities, was to adapt;

(3) that with the tapering of funding to RICs and Education Scotland's staffing reduction from 6 to 4 Senior Regional Advisors, it had been necessary to reconsider how Education Scotland 'groups' local authorities to ensure an effective delivery model which was also designed to improve the alignment of Education Scotland's Corporate Plan to the current needs of the system and Scottish Government's priorities;

(4) that moving forward, Education Scotland planned to augment its improvement activity associated with the Scottish Attainment Challenge and in November 2023, David Gregory had been appointed by Education Scotland as the interim Strategic Director of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and in January 2024 a review and 'regrouping' of local authorities had been undertaken, resulting in Education Scotland shifting its aligned support from 6 regional groupings of local authorities to 4;

(5) that 4 Senior Regional Advisors would remain in place to provide strategic support to the local authorities within those 4 groupings, alongside associated Attainment Advisors, with each group equally consisting of 8 local authorities and the model and rationale for change had been shared with ADES Executive in advance of its implementation;

(6) of a variety of factors that had been considered to support the changes of local authority groupings, as detailed in the report;

(7) of the current alignment and the new operational delivery model moving forward, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;

(8) that where Education Scotland had already committed support to West Partnership RIC activity during the academic session 2023-24, this would continue until the agreed date of completion; and

(9) of the proposed implementation of Education Scotland's transition to the new operational model and groupings, as detailed in the report.

After consideration, and having heard a presentation by David Gregory, Strategic Director, Education Scotland, during which he provided an update in respect of the 4 newly appointed Senior Regional Advisors across the new support delivery model of the 4 Local Authority Groupings, the committee

(a) noted

(i) the proposed change;

(ii) how existing RIC work would be supported by Education Scotland as a result of restructure and recent announcements regarding the future of RIC funding; and

(b) thanked David for his presentation.

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

3 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, including the projected commitments against each programme workstream and the claims 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) of the updated forecast for 2023/24 against each workstream, as detailed in the report; and

(3) of the budget and claims to date, as detailed in the report.

After consideration and having heard Lynne Turner, Glasgow City Council, the committee noted

(a) the updated projected commitments against each workstream; and

(b) the first 2 claims made during 2023/24.

West Partnership Interim Evaluation Report January 2024 – Progress and presentation noted.

4 There was submitted a report by the Data and Evaluation Officer, Renfrewshire Council, providing a summary of the West Partnership (WP) half-year interim update covering the period August 2023 to January 2024 which was detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and had also included an overview from the Leadership, Empowerment and Improvement, the Curriculum, Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, and the Wellbeing from Learning workstreams, advising

(1) that this interim evaluation came approximately 6 months after the commencement of the academic session and was an early indication of progress towards workstream outcomes;

(2) that the workstream lead officers for Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Wellbeing for Learning had taken up post with the WP in August 2023 and this update 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;

(3) that as of January 2024, the WP had received just over 7100 sign-ups across 55 separate sessions with sign-ups coming from 3833 different practitioners where sign-up name data had been collected, which had accounted for 17% of all potential WP practitioners, and that when modelling for sign ups where name information was missing, the WP had predicted that it had engaged with approximately 25% of all WP practitioners;

(4) that sign-up data had shown engagement with just under 900 different establishments, with the biggest contributing group being Primary schools (472), followed by early years establishments (236) and Secondary schools (105), together with sign-ups being received from 87% of all primary, secondary, and special schools in the WP region;

(5) that sign-up data had also demonstrated that just under 900 practitioners had registered for more than 1 event, often engaging in multiple activities across workstreams, with also identified evidence of clusters of engagement where individual establishments had engaged across practitioner roles and activities;

(6) that qualitative evidence from each workstream had continued to demonstrate how it had provided opportunities for collaboration and knowledge/confidence enhancement, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;

(7) that at a halfway point in the year, the WP had evaluations from 38 different activities which provided participants an opportunity to evaluate the impact of the session on their knowledge and/or confidence and that from 2378 evaluations the WP had identified self-reported improvements from 1973 completed submissions, which had suggested that activities were stimulating improvements in practitioner knowledge/confidence 83% of the time; and

(8) of 1 significant risk regarding the uncertainty of future funding, as detailed in the report.

After consideration and having heard a presentation by Dr James Bowness, Data and Evaluation Officer, Renfrewshire Council, the committee noted progress

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

(b) of each workstream's programmes for the period; and

(c) of the reach of the West Partnership.

Spotlight on Curriculum, Learning, Teaching & Assessment - Presentation noted.

5 The committee heard a presentation by Liz McTiernan, Curriculum, Learning, Teaching and Assessment (CLTA) Workstream Lead Officer, West Partnership providing a CLTA workstream update, during which she highlighted

(1) that the aspiration to build a networked learning system remained a shared priority across the West Partnership;

(2) details regarding a sectoral breakdown of CLTA participants so far in the 2023/24 academic session;

(3) that there was continued buy-in to maintain a strong collective focus on pedagogy, and the CLTA workstream had facilitated the delivery of a series of professional learning dedicated to the Principles of Effective Learning through Play and Enquiry that had been developed collaboratively by the Early Years Specialist Network, which had been supported by practitioners across the West Partnership Local Authorities and Education Scotland;

(4) that there was support and scope for a flexible approach to enable the participation of teachers, middle and senior leaders to shape and drive the work of the Partnership more directly; and

(5) that respondents had also noted qualitatively how the series would lead to practice change in their own settings, which had originated from practitioners in a range of roles demonstrating the ways in which the professional learning series could meet the needs of a variety of practitioners; and

(6) that with regard to the next steps, the sessions would be recorded and available to be accessed through the West Partnership website.

After consideration, the committee noted and thanked Liz for her presentation.

Scottish Government RIC Review - Verbal update noted etc.

6 With reference to the minutes of 21st November 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, Director of Education, East Renfrewshire Council and Regional Lead Officer, highlighting

(1) that the review had been published in January 2024 and had concluded that

(a) RIC engagement with, and support to, pupils and practitioners across early years, primary, special and secondary settings had continued to expand and deepen since the last evaluation of the RICs;

(b) evaluation of RIC supports by practitioners who were directly engaged with RICs were consistently strong and that RICs had continued to strengthen collaboration across and between local authorities, between RICs and with other partners; and

(c) 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;

(2) that in a statement to Parliament in November 2023, the Cabinet Secretary indicated that it had been decided, in light of the review, that the funding for RICs would be tapered, repurposing that funding to better support teachers in classrooms and that the plans around Centre for Teaching Excellence was not yet clear, however, funding for the RICs would reduce in 2024/25 and then stop;

(3) that in November 2023 the level of funding had not been confirmed and that as a RIC we had started to explore and plan for a range of scenarios for next stage depending on the final funding provided;

(4) that funding for 2024/25 had been clarified by the SG on 30th January 2024 and for 2024/25 RICs had been provided with 50% of the 2023/24 funding, which for the West Partnership (WP) had amounted to around £750,000;

(5) that following confirmation of the funding the WP team had begun to finalise scenario planning to ensure the continuation of the highly effective programmes and networks on the 50% funding for the coming year, and a priority would be working with school staff and central officers to build a more established and effective networked learning system particularly in those areas where there was no WP core team or funding;

(6) that discussions with Directors and Chief Education Officers had highlighted the need for the WP to continue to add value to the work of individual Local Authorities (LAs) and to continue the focus on

(a) the aspiration to build a networked learning system across the WP, thereby adding value to the work of individual Las;

(b) continued buy-in to maintain a strong collective focus on pedagogy; and

(c) support and scope for a flexible approach, to enable the participation of teachers, middle and senior leaders to shape and drive the work of the WP, more directly;

(7) that in planning for 2024/25 WP officers were considering each programme, collaborative enquiry activity, professional learning activity and network against a set of criteria to establish which had the most significant impact and reach and where WP activity was different from other local and national offers;

(8) that WP officers were currently in the process of developing more detailed plans setting out the themes that they would continue to collaborate on and how those would be supported strategically and operationally in 2024/25 and beyond;

(9) that part of those plans would be setting out the required staffing in terms of the WP Core Team for 2024/25 and what that might look like in 2025/26 and beyond, which would then be used to inform the WP Improvement Plan for next year, and given the reduction in funding and work, discussion was taking place nationally about the expectations in relation to planning and reporting; and

(10) that the expectation was that Directors would finalise these in the next few weeks and present them to this Committee at the next meeting on 28th May 2024 along with discussion at the relevant LA Education Committees as appropriate.

After consideration, the committee

(i) thanked Mark for his update; and

(ii) noted concerns and disappointment raised by Members regarding the reduction of RIC funding, especially given how well they had been performing.