

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: POLITICAL LITERACY AND THE REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE FOR SCOTLAND
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 4 February 2014
Author: ACTING DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE OF PAPER

1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out how Education Services and Falkirk schools plan to address the issues of political literacy and the referendum on independence for Scotland.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Political literacy is an important component of the Curriculum for Excellence and is central to citizenship education. Curriculum Paper 14 outlines the key issues involved in developing political literacy in schools and is attached as Appendix 1.

2.2 The issue of political literacy has been given added significance by the referendum on independence for Scotland planned to take place on 18 September 2014, as the franchise has now been extended to include 16 and 17 year olds.

2.3 To assist all involved in education in Scotland a briefing has been issued by the Association of Directors in Education Scotland (ADES), Education Scotland, The Electoral Commission, the Electoral Management Board for Scotland and School Leaders Scotland. It is attached as Appendix 2.

2.4 The purpose of this briefing is to provide information on sources of information and guidance for anyone interested in developing young people's political literacy around the referendum on independence for Scotland. It is for anyone with a responsibility for young people's education including teachers, headteachers, Education Authorities, community learning practitioners, and college/university staff.

2.5 The inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds in the franchise for the referendum raises issues about their participation, and it is important that they receive information in a clear, accessible and impartial way. The briefing identifies different organisations which have a role to play in this respect and how they intend to fulfil their roles in a politically-neutral manner. Practitioners working with young people will support them to develop the knowledge, confidence and skills to participate in the Referendum, and the briefing also sets out some of the resources which will become available to help them in areas such as:

- Ensuring young people are registered; and

- Know how to cast their vote.
- Ensuring young people understand the proposals, can research the issues, and are able to make an informed choice.

3. THE REFERENDUM IN FALKIRK SCHOOLS

- 3.1 To assist schools in developing political literacy amongst pupils and prepare them for the referendum, whilst ensuring that they maintain strict impartiality, Education Services Management Team has developed a strategy paper that all secondary schools will be required to adhere to between February and June 2014. This strategy paper was prepared in consultation with Secondary Headteachers and both the national 'Yes Scotland' and 'Better Together' organisation is attached as Appendix 3.
- 3.2 The strategy paper should be seen in the context of Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 14 and the guidance document (Appendices 1 and 2).

4. RECOMMENDATION

4.1 That Education Executive:

- (i) notes Curriculum for Excellence Briefing 14 and the guidance 'Political literacy and the referendum on independence for Scotland'; and
- (ii) approves the strategy paper 'Educating Young People for the Referendum in Falkirk Schools'.

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Director of Education
Date:

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL