



Agenda Item 3

Minute

Draft

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Minute of meeting of the EDUCATION, CHILDREN and YOUNG PEOPLE EXECUTIVE held remotely on Tuesday 23 March 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

Councillors: David Alexander
Robert Bissett
Fiona Collie
Joan Coombes
Nigel Harris
James Kerr
Adanna McCue
Cecil Meiklejohn (Convener)
Lynn Munro
Laura Murtagh
Alan Nimmo
Pat Reid

**Representatives
of Religious
Bodies:** Evelyn Crosbie
Maureen Harkins
Rev Michael Rollo

Co-Optees: Holly Anderson, Pupil Representative
Fiona Craig, Teacher Representative
Callum Mack, Pupil Representative
Karen Procek, Parent Representative
Merle Stevenson, Parent Representative

Officers: Sally Buchanan, Senior Fairer Falkirk Co-ordinator
Kerry Drinnan, Service Manager
Jack Frawley, Team Leader – Committee Services
Gary Greenhorn, Head of Planning and Resources
Sara Lacey, Head of Social Work Children's Services
Kenneth Lawrie, Chief Executive
David Mackay, Head of Education
Mark Meechan, Community Learning & Development
Manager
Colin Moodie, Chief Governance Officer
Robert Naylor, Director of Children's Services
Margaret Smith, Accountancy Services Manager
Vivien Thomson, Service Manager

Also Attending: Sara Hampson, Scottish Government
Rebecca Williams, ARC Scotland

ECYE30. Apologies

An apology was intimated on behalf of John Chalmers, Teacher Representative.

ECYE31. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations.

ECYE32. Minute

Decision

The minute of the meeting of the Education, Children and Young People Executive held on 26 January 2021 was approved.

ECYE33. Rolling Action Log

A rolling action log detailing decisions not yet implemented following the previous meeting on 26 January 2021 was provided. Items 484 – Falkirk Community Learning and Development (CLD) – Action Plan 2018 – 2021; 521 – Motion – School Transport; 530 – Five Year General Fund Capital Programme 2020/21 – 2024/25, and 536 – Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2020) were all subject of reports on the agenda and accordingly fell from the Rolling Action Log.

Decision

The Education, Children & Young People Executive noted the rolling action log.

ECYE34. Presentation – Enhanced Transitions Pilot

The Education, Children and Young People Executive received a presentation on the Enhanced Transitions Pilot from Kerry Drinnan, Sara Hampson, Vivien Thomson and Rebecca Williams.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive noted the presentation.

ECYE35. Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) – 1140 Expansion Plan Update

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on progress with the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Plans. The report set out updated information on the Scottish Government's announcements on the temporary Restrictions Fund, the Deferred Places Pilot and Progress Reports; the next phases and proposals to expand early intervention support; proposals to increase capacity to meet anticipated growth in demand for statutory places, and an update on the overall financial position.

The St Francis PS project had been completed and it was expected that Nethermains PS and Parkhill ELCC would be completed by the next meeting. 18 projects were on-going and full details of the projects were contained in an appendix to the report.

It was proposed to increase the Capacity for Eligible 2-Year Olds. It was expected that as a result of the financial and economic insecurity caused by the pandemic, there would be a consequential increase in the number of families that would meet the qualifying criteria for a statutory 2-year old place. From August 2021, as part of the agreed planned expansion, capacity for 2-year olds was due to be increased by 15 places.

Across the ELC estate, there were 7 centres providing 57 baby places. All places were currently used by families who paid for non-statutory childcare. The proposal re-prioritised 27 places for the purpose of providing statutory early intervention and prevention support for very young children who were referred by Health or Social Work as being deemed to be at risk or vulnerable. The places would be re-prioritised only as and when the current fee-paying places were vacated. No one who currently had a baby place would be displaced.

The Scottish Government had recently announced a further package of £3.8m of financial support as part of the Temporary Restrictions Fund (TRF) for all private nurseries and out of school care providers for each 4-week period that they remained open to provide childcare to support key worker and vulnerable families. Falkirk's share was £80,000 plus a £2,000 administration fee. The payments were fixed based on the registered capacity of each establishment. They ranged from £575 to £2,800.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive:-

- (1) noted the updates provided on the remaining projects as detailed in appendix 1 to the report;**

- (2) **agreed the proposals outlined in sections 4.3.2 - 4.3.4 of the report regarding the progression of the of early intervention strategies;**
- (3) **noted the early intervention pilot project and next phases as outlined in Sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 of the report;**
- (4) **noted that Children’s Services officers would be responsible for the administration of the recently announced Temporary Restrictions Fund as outlined in section 4.4 of the report;**
- (5) **agreed to the proposal, regarding increasing statutory place capacity as detailed in section 4.5 of the report, and**
- (6) **noted the financial position as detailed in section 6.1 and appendix 2 of the report.**

ECYE36. Falkirk Community Learning and Development (CLD) Annual Update on Action Plan 2018-2021

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services providing the annual progress update on Year 2 of Falkirk’s CLD 3 Year Action Plan (2018-2021) which covered the period September 2019 – September 2020.

Based on the Regulations and Guidance, the expectation was for the Council to:-

- co-ordinate the provision of community learning and development with stakeholders;
- describe the actions that would be taken to provide and co-ordinate community learning and development between 1 September 2021 and 31 August 2024;
- describe the actions of partners for the provision of community learning and development from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2024; and
- describe any needs for providing community learning and development that would not be met between 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2024.

The Covid pandemic represented a significant challenge for Falkirk’s CLD partners. The pandemic had presented challenges for Falkirk’s more vulnerable learners - digital poverty and financial insecurity resulted in people being unable to access learning due to a lack of digital awareness, skills, devices or connectivity. CLD practitioners had been widely recognised as Key Workers during the pandemic. As such, CLD practitioners were involved in essential front-line responses through adapting the CLD offer to include:-

- contribution to food emergency work and medicine delivery;
- being a first point of contact for vulnerable communities;
- developing and supporting networks of volunteers;
- moving services online and addressing emerging issues around mental health and wellbeing;
- providing front line support for vulnerable children and families;
- supporting communities to develop local responses to the crisis, providing information and advice networks;
- continuing to be a front-line presence in the most deprived communities; and
- offering a blended learning model that provided young people and adults with more opportunities for learning.

Falkirk's CLD Action Plan 2018/21 highlighted 15 agreed Priority Actions. Progress had begun to be made against the actions until March 2020, when, due to Covid, priorities had to be changed and resources redirected. Since then, Falkirk's CLD partners had focused their efforts on developing services that aimed to mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive agreed:-

- (1) that the progress made against 6 of the Priority Areas outlined in appendix 1 to the report could be used to update the actions recorded on the current Plan, and**
- (2) to request that the Director of Children's Services brought forward the proposals for the new draft Falkirk CLD Action Plan covering 2021 – 2024 later in the year.**

ECYE37. Forth Valley and West Lothian Regional Improvement Collaborative Progress Report

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on the work of the Regional Improvement Collaborative (RIC).

As a result of the impact of the pandemic, a review of ongoing RIC provision was carried out by Education Scotland. As a result of the recommendations of the review officers in the six themed Work Streams, had focussed their efforts in supporting colleagues and young people in educational recovery. Work Stream plans had been modified and the strategic Recovery Plan had been produced and approved in December 2020 which was provided as an appendix to the report.

The review also recommended that the RIC's Governance became more inclusive and, as a result, a new RIC Governance model had been put in place. Key elements of this involved the inclusion of pupil voice, parents

and partners from Further and Higher Education. There was an ongoing review of the role and function of the RICs being carried out by the Scottish Government.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive noted the:-

- (1) approved Regional Improvement Collaborative Recovery Plan, and**
- (2) updated Regional Improvement Collaborative Governance Plan.**

ECYE38. Consideration of Changes to Current Home to Schools Transport Policy and Arrangements

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which set out information relating to the planning, administration and financial implications that would result from amendment of the Home to School Transport Policy. The Education, Children & Young People Executive, had agreed at its meeting of 28 January 2020 to instruct the Director of Children's Services to bring a report to a future meeting, regarding school transport for children with more than one residence as set out in the Transport Policy – Operational Guidance, with:-

- (i) an analysis of how many children were affected by the current policy;
- (ii) potential options to provide transport, and
- (iii) information on any cost implications arising therefrom.

Under the current policy arrangements for home to school transport there was provision of a bus pass or taxi service from a single ("main") address, where distance (or safety) entitlement applied.

There were significant challenges faced if existing policy amendments were to be made, which included:-

- Provision of a bus pass and/or taxi service from two addresses, where distance (or safety) entitlement applied, would be required. This could be in different areas.
- In some circumstances the current (main) address was not distance/safety entitled, but the second parent's address would be, so transport was only required from that address.
- Unless both parents lived on the same bus route, a scholar's bus pass would be required for 2 different services. These were both charged at full annual cost.
- If taxi provision was appropriate, then the pattern of residence would need to be fixed (stipulated days) as any changes to that would involve significant administration input and would have contractual

challenges for the taxi provider. This could require 2 separate taxi contracts, which would be less efficient and more costly.

- There was no data available on how many families there were in the area where the parents lived at different addresses, and how many of these would become distance or safety entitled under the proposal.
- Such a change could create a precedent that may result in challenge to the way in which “main residence” determined the school catchment area a pupil lived in. Such a challenge, if successful would cause significant admission capacity and planning challenges for the Council in determining school place entitlement. Equally, having accepted that a pupil could have 2 main residences could give rise to the unprecedented situation that both parents could request a place in their own catchment school if they both reside in separate catchment areas.

Included in the Scottish Government’s 2021/22 budget were plans to introduce free bus travel for under 22s. While the full details of this scheme had yet to be agreed, this may help support a number of young people who, in addition to their main residence, may also stay at another address some of the time.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive agreed not to amend the Home to School Transport Policy for the reasons summarised in section 7.1 of the report.

The Education, Children & Young People Executive observed a minute silence marking a year since Scotland first went into lockdown.

ECYE39. SQA Attainment in Falkirk Secondary Schools (2020)

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services which provided information on the overall attainment of young people leaving Falkirk Council’s secondary schools in 2019/20.

Curriculum for Excellence (CFE) comprised a broad general education up to the end of S3 followed by a senior phase of learning from S4 to S6. During the senior phase a young person built up a range of qualifications, following a curriculum pathway that best met their needs and interests.

For 2020 the absence of external assessment information, and the Ministerial direction to award estimated grades, had led to a different pattern of attainment than seen in previous years. The results for 2020 should not be directly compared to those in previous or future years. The 2020 Insight data therefore could not be used to directly demonstrate subject, school or authority statistical improvement compared with

previous years. Care was also required when comparing attainment to the virtual comparator.

When ranked against other local authorities in Scotland, Falkirk ranked 23rd in Scotland for positive leaver destinations. There had been an improving trend over the past decade but in 2019/20 the percentage of school leavers entering a positive destination fell by 3%. At the same time the Scottish Average had fallen by 2%. The percentage of Falkirk leavers in a positive destination was in line with that of the VC, the RIC and the national average.

Compared to the previous year, 7% more school leavers from the 2019/20 cohort went into Further and Higher Education. However, there had been an 11% decrease in school leavers going straight into employment.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive:-

- (1) noted Falkirk Council secondary school leavers' results for 2019/20;**
- (2) noted the positive progress made by Falkirk Council pupils across a range of attainment measures, and**
- (3) requested that the Director of Children's Services continued to engage with schools on tracking and monitoring pupil's progress, and with partners in planning for positive school leaver destinations.**

Evelyn Crosbie and Maureen Harkins left the meeting during consideration of the previous item.

ECYE40. Connected Falkirk Update

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on progress with the Connected Falkirk programme and the overall financial position of the programme.

Connected Falkirk was a programme that would deliver personal devices for all P6-S6 pupils and shared devices at a ratio of 1:5 for P1-P5 pupils. There was also support for the associated infrastructure across the school estate. This work fell within the overarching 'Succeed Today, Excel Tomorrow (STET)' strategy. Following a c.£9.6m capital investment in Connected Falkirk, £200k of funding was allocated to the Connected Falkirk Sprint Team to support the roll-out of the programme to 22,000 young people and 2,500 staff.

Two separate procurement exercises for Connected Falkirk had been undertaken:-

- Devices and Services- Awarded in to XMA Ltd in August 2020, for a period of 4 years, to August 2024. The value of the contract was £6.4million.
- Connectivity and Wi-Fi- Awarded to VirginMedia Ltd in October 2020, for a period of 5 years, to October 2025. The value of the contract was £1.9million.

To ensure the deployment of the available stock of devices, the plan had been pivoted to focus on deployment to teaching staff and the most vulnerable pupils. Over the course of November 2020 to January 2021, the Connected Falkirk Sprint Team undertook the deployment of 1,873 devices and familiarisation training to all Primary and Secondary stage teaching staff, and deployment of 1,500 devices and 600 Internet connectivity packs to those pupils most in need. The wider pupil device rollout would begin from March 2021. The delivery remained on target for the full pupil deployment of devices by the end of August 2021.

14 schools had their new Internet lines installed and ready for connection to new Wi-Fi. 25 schools had their cabling groundworks underway and 19 schools were in the planning phase with installers. In terms of Wi-Fi installation in the 58 school sites all Secondary schools had their cabling and installation works underway.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive noted the progress to date of the programme of work.

ECYE41. Presentation – Child Poverty Action Plan

The Education, Children and Young People Executive received a presentation on the Child Poverty Action Plan from Sally Buchanan, Senior Fairer Falkirk Co-ordinator.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive noted the presentation.

Councillor Collie left the meeting during consideration of the previous item.