

Education Advisory Group**Report by John Blair, Director, Resources****1 Purpose of Report**

This report invites the Cabinet to consider arrangements for the possible establishment of an Education Advisory Group and outlines the relevant issues relating to this.

2 Background

- 2.1** The Director, Education and Children's Services, reported to the Cabinet on 16 April 2013, on a proposal to establish an Education Convener Advisory Group.
- 2.2** It was intended that this forum would be used informally as a platform for the "Education Convener" to help inform and explore developments in relevant policy, incorporating the principles arising from the Christie report. The report outlined the key elements of the Advisory Group, including its composition, scope and objectives. It was also explained that the Group would not have any formal governance status. The Cabinet approved the establishment of the Advisory Group.
- 2.3** Subsequently, on 25 February 2014, the Director, Education, Communities and Economy, provided an update on the progress made by the Education Convener Advisory Group and advised that following the appointment of a new Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Education (Councillor Constable), it was proposed to revisit the purpose and constitution of the Group and, following consultation, to bring forward a further report in due course. The position was noted by the Cabinet.

3 Future Models of Service Delivery

- 3.1** The Council has previously endorsed the Future Models of Service Delivery approach whereby communities are recognised as key stakeholders in the design, delivery, evaluation and improvement of the services they receive.
- 3.2** Within Education, it is considered by the Political Administration that this can be reflected by working in partnership, at a policy and strategy level, with those stakeholders who are crucial to the Midlothian school communities, including pupils, parents and staff. In doing so, the capacity of communities can be recognised, acknowledged and harnessed to take forward improved delivery of Midlothian's educational services.

3.3/

- 3.3** Against this background, the following proposal has been developed by the Political Administration regarding the possible establishment of an Education Advisory Group. The view was also taken that for legal and practical reasons it was best to leave the education function within the Cabinet's remit rather than seeking to establish a separate Education Committee.

4 Education Advisory Group Proposal

4.1 Key Principles

The proposed Education Advisory Group (which will replace the existing Education Convener Advisory Group) will provide stakeholders with an opportunity to focus on and debate key aspects of the education provision in Midlothian. Key principles include:-

- working together in an open forum to help secure continuous improvements
- discussing and reviewing key developments within education
- scrutinising and evaluating performance
- providing advice to the Director, Education, Communities and Economy

4.2 Key Drivers in Education

The Council priorities of Early Years and Positive Destinations sit within the Education Directorate. Alongside this, there are a number of key drivers to set the context for the work of educational establishments and to help shape and determine the quality of learning experiences and educational outcomes of the children and young people in Midlothian. These drivers include:-

- Delivery of key policy and legislative requirements
- Shared vision and common purpose
- High aspirations and expectations
- Robust self-evaluation
- Innovative and inspiring learning experiences
- Career-long professional learning
- Collaboration and partnership
- Meeting learners needs

4.3 Role and Purpose

It is proposed that the Education Advisory Group should meet 4 times per year. Each meeting could focus on one or more of the aforementioned drivers and this would determine a clear theme for each meeting. The Group could, for example:-

- Comment on new policies and practices
- Comment on current approaches, along with new and emerging developments
- Receive presentations from schools, young people and education staff

- Discuss associated performance data and evaluate progress
- Discuss and debate key issues and identify opportunities for improvement
- Provide feedback, advice and recommendations to the Director, Education, Communities and Economy

4.4 Membership

It is intended that the Education Advisory Group will operate informally and will not have any formal governance status.

Membership of the Group would include:-

- Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Education (Chair)
- Head of Education
- Religious representation
- 3 young people, to include representation from the Youth Parliament and Looked After Young People
- 3 parents/parent representatives of pupils attending Midlothian educational establishments
- 2 representatives of Midlothian school staff (i.e. one from each of the Primary and Secondary sectors)
- a representative from the business community
- invitees at the discretion of the Cabinet Portfolio-holder for Education

Administrative support for the Advisory Group would be provided from within the Education, Communities and Economy Directorate.

5 Legal/Standing Order Considerations

There are no Legal or Standing Order issues as the Education Advisory Group is not a decision-making body of the Council, nor will it exercise any delegated functions. Rather, it is proposed that the Group will have an advisory role and will make recommendations to the Director, Education, Communities and Economy.

6 Report Implications

6.1 Resource

Any costs associated with the running of the Education Advisory Group (which are expected to be minor) will be met from within the Education budget.

6.2 Risk

There are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

6.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian

- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

6.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The proposals contained in this report will contribute to the achievement of the following key priorities:

Early years and reducing child poverty: the proposed arrangements will help to ensure that the early years agenda is taken forward at a strategic level in the Council and that the outcomes of early years education and childcare are prioritised.

Positive destinations for young people: in recognition of the importance of education in helping young people move to positive destinations, the proposals will ensure schools are held to account on this very critical subject, that they report on it and that the voice of young people and parents is heard to ensure a rounded and supported position is taken.

6.5 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Any recommendations to the Director, Education, Communities and Economy will be considered with a view to improving performance and outcomes for children and young people.

6.6 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The preventative approach will permeate discussions and provide a context for discussions at group meetings.

6.7 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Christie Commission highlighted the following:-

“Public service providers must be required to work much more closely in partnership, to integrate service provision and thus improve the outcomes they achieve.”

In accordance with these principles, the proposal seeks to involve parents, young people and teachers, in recognition of the importance of working collaboratively with each of these groups to ensure the educational outcomes for Midlothian are maximised.

6.8 Ensuring Equalities

An equalities impact assessment is not required in relation to this report.

6.9 Supporting Sustainable Development

The work of the proposed new Education Advisory Group will be undertaken in the context of the various statutory and Council policies, including those relating to sustainable development.

6.10 IT Issues

None

7 Recommendation

The Cabinet is invited to authorise the Director, Education, Communities and Economy to proceed with the establishment of an Education Advisory Group on the basis set out in this report.

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