

Council to retain status quo with schools in W and SW Edinburgh

Ahead of the Education Committee meeting today Thursday the Convener and Vice- Convener have issued a statement.



Councillor Ian Perry

Education Convener Cllr Ian Perry said: “The debate on the future of schools in the South West and West of the city looks likely to be decided in favour of the status quo – Option 1 – when a decision is made at today’s Education, Children and Families Committee. There is no doubt the majority of responses we received advocated this and probably if the parent councils of Clovenstone and Canal View had not spoken out so forcefully and they were also happy to send their children to Wester Hailes Education Centre then we would not be divided.

“My motivation in this process has always been to provide the best education possible for all the young people in the area which promotes equality and inclusion. While it is tempting to

agree with the other parties I remain to be convinced that the status quo will achieve this.

“As I have said all along that if we are going to spend over £150m on new schools we need to obtain the maximum educational advantage. I am still unconvinced that if we are going to spend £30m to accommodate 700 pupils in Wester Hailes that we would be able to encourage all those parents who send their children to higher attaining schools – like Forrester and Currie – to send their children to what is at present a lower attaining school in their local catchment.

“The main argument to rebuild WHEC on the same site seems to be because it is a local school that serves the local community however this is not the case with less than half of the families in the area choosing to send their children to WHEC. Residents certainly value the community facilities and that is why we have given the guarantee that they will be maintained and upgraded.

“The other reason I remain unconvinced is it would appear from the evidence that a school with a social mix work best for those pupils in SIMD 1 – 3. The report tomorrow shows that less able pupils achieve better attainment in schools with a social mix. And to be fair this should not come as a surprise as creating schools with a social mix was one of the founding principles of comprehensive education and to my knowledge this never been challenged.

“However, while I remain unconvinced clearly the opposition parties do not. They clearly believe that their plan to rebuild a new school in Wester Hailes will work and I hope it does. Nothing would give me greater pleasure to be wrong and we end up with a school that is indistinguishable from any other comprehensive school in Edinburgh.

“We will of course continue to work with the local community and opposition parties to find ways to improve the attainment

in Wester Hailes. The Leader and Deputy Leader will be visiting the school next week to meet the head teacher and myself and Deputy Education Convener, Cllr Dickie, will meet officials next week.

“Let’s finish by once again thanking all those who have taken part in the consultation and acknowledge the success of the Save our Schools Campaign of convincing politicians to support them. I regret that we could not come to a compromise that was acceptable but I am sure everyone agrees we want best education possible for all the young people in the South West of Edinburgh.”



Alison Dickie Vice-Convener of Education Children and Families

Cllr Alison Dickie, Vice Convener, said: “As a former teacher I always want to maximise opportunities to attain and achieve for all young people in whichever part of this great city they live in. I firmly believe maintaining the status quo will not achieve this.

“As the City’s administration, we have very serious concerns about the ability of this option to narrow the attainment gap in the South West of the city. Young people flourish within the environment of a genuinely comprehensive school, and with

the breadth of curriculum that supports truly personalised pathways and the reaching of their fullest potential.

“We remain resolute in our commitment to tackle the deep inequality and stigmatisation that exists within Edinburgh, and to ensuring excellence and equity for every single young person, not just some. Our Children’s Services Plan is committed to tackling this and part of this commitment involves greater engagement with young people whose voices are not heard, their families and communities.

“Whilst the existing model of school provision in the south west limits the scope of opportunity that all young people deserve, we will, following tomorrow’s committee, be dedicated to further engagement with the young people and families from the Wester Hailes Education Centre, and particularly the feeder primaries. Together, we will help them to feel that their voices are better heard, and work with them to develop stigma-free plans for the future which support the diversity of their strengths and talents and maximise on their aspirations and attainment.

“We will also continue to promote our wider vision of an equal city that sits together, learns together, and works together, across the beautiful diversity of our backgrounds.”