

Education Executive
13 September 2011

IRVINE, 13 September 2011 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

John Bell, Alex Gallagher, Gordon McConnell, Peter McNamara, John Reid and Gordon Smith.

Also Present

L. Cruickshank, Headteacher, Caledonia Primary School.

In Attendance

C. Kirk (Corporate Director), M. Armstrong, M. Docherty and J. Leckie, Heads of Service, A. Sutton, Manager Information and Culture, D. Carracher, Quality Improvement Manager, L. Cook, Education Development Officer, E. Martin and W. Ferries, Principal Teachers (Extended Outreach Services) and B. McGhee, Active Schools Manager (Education and Skills); C. McCourt, Finance Manager (Finance and Infrastructure); J. Montgomery, General Manager, A. Little, Committee Services Officer and C. Rowney, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Tom Barr and David O'Neill.

1. Appointment of a Religious Representative to the Education Executive

The Committee was advised of the resignation of Reverend David Karoon as one of the three religious representatives on the Education Executive, and on arrangements to fill the vacancy arising. A report thereon will be submitted to a future meeting.

The Education Executive (a) acknowledged the contribution made by Reverend David Karoon to the work of the Education Executive; and (b) noted that a report on the appointment of a third religious representative would be presented to a future meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Education Executive held on 2 August 2011 were signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

4. Secondary Outreach

The Education Executive received a presentation on the work of the Pupil Support Services Extended Outreach Team.

The presentation provided details of:-

- Curriculum for Excellence developments;
- 16+ learning choices;
- More Choices, More Chances;
- A robust staged intervention process and partnership approach;
- Examples of young people referred to the Extended Outreach Team and the positive family outcomes achieved;
- The focus on developing lifelong skills and embedded employability skills, leading to achievement and accreditation;
- Aspirations for young people;
- Celebrating success and recognising "distance travelled";
- Post school experiences;
- Employability and employers' views;
- Practical everyday support; and
- Support after leaving

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following areas:-

- Partnership working via the Integrated Assessment and Partnership Forum;
- The individualised programme for each young person according to their needs;
- Monitoring the progress of young people who have left the programme and the continued provision of support if required;
- The allocation of resources by the Resource Allocation Management Group; and
- Work also undertaken by Skills Development Scotland to provide support to young people.

Noted.

5. Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) Examination Results 2011

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the performance of North Ayrshire schools in the National Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examinations of 2011.

The report indicated that Standard Tables and Charts (STACS) are published each year which give a detailed analysis of the national SQA Examination results pre-appeal, and outlined the average figures for five or more awards at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) at levels 3, 4 and 5, a range of level 6 awards and level 7 awards. The appendices to the report provided an analysis of these charts over a five year period, making comparisons with other similar authorities, national performance and past performance in North Ayrshire between 2007 and 2011, with the baseline for most of the performance measures taken as 2007.

Members asked questions and were provided with information in relation to:-

- The positive impact of changes in management and the Refresh Programme on attainment levels achieved by some schools;
- Work with schools and teaching staff to raise attainment in specific subject areas;
- The influence of economic factors such as deprivation and unemployment on attainments levels; and
- Work undertaken in conjunction with a range of partners with hard to reach young people and their families.

The Education Executive noted (a) the content of the report and the achievements of pupils, parents, carers and staff in the 2011 SQA examinations; (b) that a further report will be submitted, in due course, concerning performance in the 2012 diet of SQA examinations and (c) the range of actions identified to improve performance.

6. Looked After and Accommodated School Leaver Destinations Session 2010/11

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on action taken to improve the post school destination of school leavers who are looked after by North Ayrshire Council.

Across Scotland there were in the most recently available census, 15892 children being looked after by local authorities. This represents 14.3 per 1000 children of the 0-18 year old population. In North Ayrshire there were 501 Looked After children, representing 17 per 1000 of the 0-18 year old population.

Skills Development Scotland provides an annual report on school leaver destinations. During the school session 2009-10, 87% of all school leavers in Scotland moved into a positive destination, with 59% of looked after school leavers moving into a positive destination. In North Ayrshire 85.5% of school leavers moved into a positive destination with 54.7% of looked after school leavers moving into a positive destination.

The report provided information on an action review of existing in school support systems for looked after pupils undertaken by the More Choices More Chances (MCMC) group within Education and Skills and proposals to improve the post-school outcomes for looked after young people.

Members asked questions and were provided with the undernoted information:-

- Work with a variety of partners, including the Ayrshire Community Trust, in the delivery of Activity Agreements;
- The work of the Looked After Children Co-ordinators in ensuring compliance with the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2009 and that all pupils identified as looked after are afforded the appropriate level of support; and
- Savings achieved by early intervention work and the reinvestment of these savings.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the information set out in relation to the post school destinations of looked after pupils; and (b) approve the targeting of support and resources to improve outcomes for these young people as detailed in the report.

7. Information on Culture: Harbour Arts Centre Business Plan and Redesign of Information and Culture Children's Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) seeking the approval of the Education Executive for (a) the Harbour Arts Centre Business Plan; and (b) a reorganisation of the current staffing structure to deliver children's library and outreach service functions within Education and Skills.

In December 2009, a Phase 1 reorganisation of the current arrangements to deliver community service functions within Education and Skills was approved by the Executive. At that time the new Information and Culture section was formed, incorporating the functions of the Library and Information Service (including family learning, supported study in libraries and community centres), Arts and Culture (including the Harbour Arts Centre, Museums); and Children's Outreach (including the Toy Library).

The restructure also delivered efficiencies by rationalising the management of services in Community and Culture that work with young people, adults and a wide range of community groups and organisations within a strong culture of customer focus and quality of service delivery.

The report provided proposals for a staffing restructure of Children's Services to remove duplication of service delivery. The redesigned service will be based around the themes of play and capacity building, and children's literacies. The associated staff costs and anticipated savings of £166,930 were detailed in the report.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a draft business plan for the Harbour Arts Centre. The plan provided information on how potential business opportunities can be exploited using relevant market research, how income can be increased through a revised pricing structure for HAC activities, a revised staffing structure and additional staffing costs of £2790.

Members asked questions and received further information in respect of:-

- The continued proportionate level of support by Information and Culture to meet the needs of the community of Arran;
- The removal of duplication of service functions and service delivery as a result of the restructure of staffing in Information and Culture Children's Services; and
- Work by Education and Skills with the Harbour Arts Centre on a Service Level Agreement, that will include a range of improvements, including revised opening hours.

The Education Executive agreed to approve Phase 2 of the Community Services restructure to include (a) the Harbour Arts Centre Business Plan; and (b) a reorganisation of the current staffing structure to deliver children's library and outreach service functions within Education and Skills.

8. Arran Outdoor Education Centre Business Plan

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the proposed development of the Arran Outdoor Education Centre into the Adventure Tourism market.

The Arran Outdoor Education Centre (AOEC) is a well-established provider of outdoor education for young people and adults. The Centre moved to a new, purpose built facility in 2008 and includes a mountain forest retreat, Cloud Base, which provides an exceptional overnight experience.

The Centre, which can provide for a wide range of additional support needs, traditionally caters for primary aged school pupils with specialist courses for secondary pupils. The current arrangements allow for very limited support for local groups and the generation of a modest commercial income.

The report provided information on proposals to develop the provision and extend the working year of the Centre, through targeting adventure tourism, such as guided walking, mountaineering, kayaking, sailing, and wildlife tourism. In addition there is scope to provide facilities to support activities such as art schools, photography courses and conferences of a specialist nature.

Appendix 1 to the report provided a business plan for the Centre. The plan provided information on the development of activities to maximise income generation, the required staffing levels for the Centre, initial funding requirements and estimated income in the first 5 years.

Members asked questions and received further information on the following:-

- The initial focus on establishing the new purpose built facility and providing outdoor education for young people; and
- The development of activities to fully utilise the Centre and generate additional income.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) the development of the Arran Outdoor Education Centre to cater for a wider range of activities, including Adventure Tourism; (b) the initial funding of £50,000 during 2011/12 to enable staff to be recruited and trained; and (c) receive a progress report on the operation of the Centre in September 2012.

9. Active Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the progress and outcomes achieved by the Active School Programme.

Sportscotland launched the Active Schools Network in 2004 with the fundamental aim of offering all children and young people the opportunities and motivation to adopt active, healthy lifestyles, now and into adulthood.

Local Authorities entered into a Partnership Agreement with Sportscotland, which detailed the agreed financial contribution from each, and also the planning processes and actions by which Active Schools will deliver the outcomes. The revised National Outcomes for the next phase of Active Schools, through to March 2015 are:

- to increase the number of children and young people participating in school and community sport and;
- to increase capacity through the recruitment, retention and development of a network of volunteers to deliver sport in schools and the wider community.

The report provided information on the seven National Priorities, identified by SportScotland as a planning framework to deliver these outcomes and details of the recent performance of Active Schools Programme in North Ayrshire.

Members asked questions and were provided with information in relation to:-

- The wide range of talented individuals in a variety of sporting spheres and plans to recognise the achievements of these young people;
- The use of electronic portfolios for young people to record their achievements;
- The provision of information to Members on the reduction in the range of activities offered through Active Schools to primary schools in 2010/11; and
- The work of an Officers' Group on preparations for the Commonwealth Games.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the achievements of the Active School Programme; (b) receive further annual updates; and (c) receive a further report on arrangements to recognise young people's sporting achievements.

10. Caledonia Primary School and Nursery Class, Saltcoats: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the HMIE Report on Caledonia Primary School and Nursery Class, Saltcoats

Caledonia Primary School and Nursery Class was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in May 2011 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages.

HM Inspectors evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school and nursery class, the environment for learning and the school's processes for self-evaluation. The examined the pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils and staff. Members of the inspection team met the chairperson of the parent council, representatives of local partners and a group of parents.

The report by HMIE Inspectors was published on 23 August 2011 and identified the following key strengths:-

- Polite and well-mannered children who feel secure and are well supported;
- High quality of display of children's work throughout the school;
- Classroom assistants who engage well with children;
- Staff who work together and are happy to try new approaches to learning; and
- Calm and purposeful leadership of the headteacher.

The following areas for improvement have been agreed between HMIE, the school, and the education authority:-

- Continue to improve learning, teaching and assessment to ensure that children know what they need to do to make their learning even better;
- Improve pace and challenge; and
- Continue to develop Curriculum for Excellence.

In consultation with the designated Quality Improvement Officer and staff, the headteacher has put plans in place to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE report into the School Improvement Plan. The school and the authority will build on the strengths identified in the inspection report and work together to address the key recommendations, as detailed in the report.

In terms of follow-through procedures, HMIE will make no further visits following this inspection. The school's progress will be reported to parents through the normal school and local authority processes.

Ms L. Cruickshank, the headteacher of the school was in attendance and answered questions in relation to the challenges facing the school, examples of activities to continue to improve attainment in writing and the use of additional teacher resources provided by the learning community cluster.

Members recorded their appreciation of the work being undertaken throughout the school.

The Education Executive noted (a) the steps taken to address the key points for action; (b) that in terms of follow-through, HMIE will make no further visits given the high level of confidence in the school to make the necessary improvements; and (c) that a report will be submitted in September 2012, on the progress of maintaining teacher numbers by the deployment of additional resources.

The meeting ended at 4.10 p.m.