

Educational Services Committee
4 April 2006

IRVINE, 4 April 2006 - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Peter McNamara, Jacqueline Browne, Donald Reid, Gordon Allison, Thomas Barr, Stewart Dewar, Jane Gorman, Jean Highgate, Margaret McDougall, Father Matthew McManus, Elisabeth Marshall, Rev. Sandy Montgomerie, David Munn, David O'Neill, John Reid, John Scott, Elaine Shaw, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

I. Snodgrass (Chief Executive); J. Travers, Corporate Director; B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources, J. Leckie and C. Kirk, Heads of Service, G. Johnstone and A. McGonigle, Quality Improvement Managers, and J. McKnight, Principal Officer (Community Learning and Development) (Educational Services); H. Hunter, Principal Accountant (Finance); and M. McKeown, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Drew Duncan and Alan Hill.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 February 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the activities associated with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme within North Ayrshire.

The Council is an Operating Authority for the Award, and Community Learning and Development has two officers dedicated to developing the Award within North Ayrshire. A total of 238 young people within North Ayrshire are currently enrolled and participating actively within the Award Programme. The report highlighted the extent and nature of Duke of Edinburgh Award related activities within North Ayrshire.

Representatives from the Three Towns Awards Group were in attendance at the meeting and presented the Committee with information on their preparations for a forthcoming visit to Morocco where they will be undertaking silver and gold expeditions.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the high level of Duke of Edinburgh's Award Programme activity within North Ayrshire; and (b) receive a follow up presentation from the Three Towns Awards Group on the outcome of their visit to Morocco.

3. Funding of Pre-School Education

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the funding and support given to pre-school groups during 2005/06, and on the proposed funding arrangements for pre-school education in 2006/07.

North Ayrshire Council provides nursery education for every child from the term after their 3rd birthday if requested by their parents, and thereafter reviews the service to ensure, as far as possible, that families can access local nursery provision to suit their needs.

£4.93 million has been set aside in 2006/07 to fund pre-school education places in the Council's own nurseries, and in those private and voluntary sector nurseries which work in partnership with the Council. Approximately 2500 places will be provided and children in their pre-school and ante pre-school years have been registered for nursery education in the nursery of their choice. Places will be offered from August 2006.

A commissioning document offering to purchase places will be sent to private and voluntary groups who work in partnership with the Council. Due to the increase in the number of private and voluntary sector groups, and the decrease in numbers of 3 to 5 year olds, not all groups will be commissioned. Some groups operating in rural areas with small numbers of children may require additional funding in order to ensure their financial viability. In previous years, the funding allocation to private and voluntary sector partners has been reviewed each December and additional funding granted. This is unlikely to be available in 2006/07. The Council will however continue to offer a wide range of support to private and voluntary sector partners.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the funding provided to voluntary and private sector groups in 2005/06; (b) approve the arrangements for commissioning nursery places from the private and voluntary sectors in 2006/07; and (c) continue the support arrangements which are in place to assist private and voluntary sector groups in providing quality nursery education.

4. Modern Apprenticeship in Youth Work

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the introduction of a Modern Apprenticeship in Youth Work.

The Council has introduced a Modern Apprenticeship scheme to train young people for employment opportunities in youth work. The Modern Apprenticeship approach will allow young people without the necessary formal qualifications at higher level, to achieve a vocational qualification that will provide an alternative route to higher education and future employment.

Four places are available and the successful applicants took up post on 30 January 2006. The Modern Apprentices will be in post for a two year period at the conclusion of which they should have achieved an SVQ III in Youth Work. The work of the Apprentices will be targeted within the Community Regeneration Areas, and each Apprentice will have a specific theme to develop in the areas of participation, employment and training, health improvement, and community safety. They will also work with local Youth Forums, Pupil Councils, and the North Ayrshire Youth Council. A progress report will be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Noted.

5. Health Promoting Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the development of the Health Promoting Schools initiative in North Ayrshire.

The Scottish Executive wish all schools in Scotland to have plans in place to become Health Promoting Schools by the end of 2007. Councils have been invited to submit Local Accreditation Schemes to the Executive by 1 September 2006, setting out how their schools intend to meet this target.

All North Ayrshire schools were provided with information on becoming Health Promoting Schools in 2004 and asked to incorporate the aims of the initiative into their development plans between 2004 and 2007. A Health Promoting Schools support pack, which contains information about the Health Promoting Schools policy and tools for evaluating and monitoring progress, has been produced by the Inter-Agency Group set up to take forward the development. This Group includes representatives from NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

The Accreditation process will consist of two phases, the initial audit and the ongoing monitoring, and will be linked to the ongoing quality improvement agenda in Councils and NHS boards.

Guidelines will be issued to schools in June setting out how they should approach the initial audit. Schools will be given until April 2007 to conduct the audit and submit their findings to the Inter-Agency Group. A Sub Group will then be responsible for moderating the audit returns and verifying evidence. Schools who reach the required standard will be awarded a certificate in recognition of their achievements in April 2007.

The Committee agreed to approve the Local Accreditation Scheme for submission to the Scottish Executive.

6. Music Developments in 2006

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on forthcoming music projects and events in 2006.

The following events are planned for 2006:-

April 2006:

Members of North Ayrshire's Senior Schools Choir will participate with groups from Sweden and Spain in an opera training and performance event at the Conservatorio de Mallorca.

June 2006:

The Council will host the Yamaha Instrumental Teacher of the Year award ceremony on 10 June at the Thistle Hotel, Irvine.

As part of the inaugural events to mark the opening of the Harbour Arts Centre, an International Piano Festival has been arranged by Cultural Services to take place between 11-16 June. This Festival will feature pianists from America and Spain as well as local artists and there will be a series of public concerts, workshops and masterclasses.

August 2006:

An invitation has now been received to send traditional musicians to Sweden in August 2006 to take part in a traditional music festival in Uddevalla.

In recognising the success of the Music Service, the Committee discussed how the Council, working with the Scottish Executive, and other relevant bodies, might fund and support talented individuals involved in other areas, such as sports, to achieve their maximum potential. It was noted that a report on sports development within North Ayrshire would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee agreed (a) that Council staff and pupils participate in music events in Spain in April 2006 and in Sweden in August 2006; (b) that the Provost and the Chair of Educational Services or his nominee, attend these events; (c) that the Council host a civic reception in connection with the Yamaha Instrumental Teacher of the Year Awards in June 2006; and (d) to receive a report on support for sports development at a future meeting.

7. Summer Playschemes for Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the provision of summer playschemes for children and young people with additional support needs.

In January 2005, the Committee approved a pilot playscheme for children and young people with additional support needs to run at Stanecastle School. This was in addition to existing playschemes running at James McFarlane, James Reid and Haysholm Schools. These playschemes provide a full programme of indoor and outdoor activities for the children and young people involved, and provide respite for families during the summer period.

Following informal consultations with staff and parents, a range of summer playscheme provision for children and young people with additional support needs across North Ayrshire is planned for 2006. The proposals take account of the lessons learned from the operation of existing playschemes and feedback from staff and parents. The parents of children involved in the playschemes will be asked to meet the same costs as those parents whose children are using other, more mainstream provision. Consultations with parents, teachers, and children, will be carried out to finalise plans for the summer playschemes which will then commence in June 2006.

The Committee agreed to approve the provision of summer playschemes for children and young people with additional support needs, as set out in the report.

8. Careers Scotland Partnership Agreement 2006/07

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Partnership Agreement between Careers Scotland and schools in North Ayrshire for 2006/07.

A Partnership Agreement between all secondary schools in North Ayrshire and Careers Scotland is negotiated annually. This outlines the service to be delivered by Careers Scotland to the schools, and the joint responsibilities of schools and Careers Scotland in providing services that will assist pupils to develop career planning skills and make the transition into a job, learning or training opportunities.

Careers Scotland is proposing a change to the 2006/07 Agreement whereby, in addition to the universal service provided to all schools, an additional service will be provided for those schools which could most benefit from further support to improve post school destination statistics. Under the proposed new Agreement, 3 secondary schools, Greenwood Academy, Irvine Royal Academy and St Michael's Academy, will receive targeted support from Careers Scotland designed to improve school leaver destinations and reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The new Partnership Agreement will complement arrangements in place in other schools in North Ayrshire, as outlined in the report. A progress report will be submitted to a future meeting.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed Partnership Agreement between Careers Scotland and North Ayrshire schools for 2006/07.

9. Charter Mark: Dykesmains Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress by schools and other areas of Educational Services towards achieving Charter Mark status.

In August 2005, the Committee noted that Loudon Montgomery Primary School and West Kilbride Primary School had successfully achieved Charter Mark status. Dykesmains Primary School, Saltcoats has now also successfully achieved the award. Support will continue to be provided to other schools and areas within Educational Services interested in undertaking assessment for the Charter Mark.

The Committee agreed that an event be arranged to mark Dykesmain Primary School's achievement in gaining Charter Mark status.

10. Eco-Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress made with Eco-Schools registration and on awards to North Ayrshire schools.

The Eco-Schools award scheme is an international initiative which accredits schools that make a commitment to continuously improve their environmental performance. The Eco-Schools programme leads to the prestigious European international award, the Green Flag. The achievement of this award shows that a school is committed to high standards in environmental education. Schools may work through the bronze, silver, and gold award programmes or go directly for Green Flag status.

Since June 2002, 58 schools in North Ayrshire have registered for the Eco-Schools initiative. The report provided information on the progress made by each school. The primary schools at West Kilbride, Caledonia, Dykesmains, Glengarnock, Lawthorn, and Skelmorlie, all currently hold Green Flag status. Other schools have variously achieved bronze, silver and gold awards.

A website was launched by the Council on 6 March 2006 to provide ideas and information for staff, pupils and parents, on how to take forward the Eco-Schools agenda.

Noted.

11. Appeals Committee - Additional Membership

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals for additional representation on Appeals Committees from members of Local Attendance Councils.

The Committee agreed to approve the inclusion of the additional members of Local Attendance Councils, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, on the membership lists from which Appeals Committee members are chosen.

12. HMIE Report: Irvine Royal Academy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the report published by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) following their inspection of Irvine Royal Academy in November 2005.

The HMIE report whilst highlighting a number of strengths, identified other areas where action is required to improve pupils' attainments and aspects of staff morale.

The report recommended that the school should put arrangements in place to review and improve the management, deployment and provision of staff, establish an effective approach to positive behaviour management, improve the quality of learning and teaching, ensure senior and middle managers lead their departments effectively so that pupils' learning experiences are of a consistently high standard, introduce systematic and rigorous procedures for quality assurance and planning for improvement, and ensure the headteacher and senior management team provides effective strategic leadership to address major weaknesses in the school's provision.

To respond to the inspection report, an improvement action plan has been agreed with HMIE and discussed with the School Board. The report highlighted the improvement measures being put in place to address the areas of weakness identified by HMIE.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals made to address the key points for action arising from the HMIE inspection report; and (b) that progress against the improvement action plan be reported in 6 months time.

13. HMIE Report: Shiskine Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the report published by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) following their inspection of Shiskine Primary School in December 2005.

The HMIE report highlighted the school's strengths and other areas where action is required to improve aspects of learning, teaching and achievement. An action plan has been drawn up to address the recommendations arising from the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals made to address the key points arising from the HMIE inspection report.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.