

Educational Services Committee
12 November 2002

Irvine, 12 November 2002 - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Peter McNamara, Jacqueline Browne, John Reid, John Bell, James Jennings, Father McManus, David Munn, David O'Neill, Samuel Taylor, Christine Welch and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

J. Travers, Corporate Director (Educational Services), B. Gardner, J. Tulips, J. Ward, L. Owens, J. Leckie, Heads of Service and J. Brady, Adviser (Educational Services), P. Doak, Senior Accountant (Finance). A. Wattie, Communications Officer and L. Docherty, Assistant Communications Officer (Communications), M. Adams and J. Bannatyne, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Thomas Barr, Gordon Clarkson, Ian Clarkson, Jane Gorman, Alan Hill, Rev. Sandy Montgomerie, Tracey McPherson and John Sillars.

Award Presentation: Pre-Mod Competition

Following performances by winners of the pre-Mod competition, the Convener, on behalf of the Council, presented Thomas Turner, Irvine Royal Academy, Jamie Munn, St. Andrew's Academy, Daniel Curral, Garnock Academy and the St. Andrew's Academy Gaelic Choir with certificates in recognition and appreciation of their successful participation in this event.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 September 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Review of Community Halls and Centres

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of a Strategic Service Review of Community Halls and Centres, incorporating a number of recommendations on their future operation, management and maintenance requirements.

The Strategic Review Working Group, comprising elected members and officers of the Council and a representative of the North Ayrshire Federation of Community Associations, visited 52 community halls and centres throughout North Ayrshire. A report on the condition of each property and any alternative property provision available, including information relating to usage and associated running costs, has been produced by the Review Group. The views of community representatives and users of the relevant properties have been incorporated where possible. On the basis of the information received from the technical inspections of the properties involved, the estimated cost of upgrading all property to an acceptable standard with an appropriate level of access for people with a disability is £4,621,770.

The Committee agreed (a) that the current Capital Programme be reviewed, to identify any possible slippage for immediate allocation to address the issue of deteriorating fabric resulting from poor roof conditions; (b) that a 10 year programme of works be prepared detailing the properties to be given priority for inclusion within annual programmes; (c) that the properties identified through the Review Group visits as having a civic function be maintained to an appropriate standard; (d) that the number of community managed properties be expanded where possible; (e) that a comprehensive review of the Council's Community Contract and its leasing and funding arrangements be undertaken; (f) that where a Community Association winds up, if a Contract cannot be re-established within 9 months, the centre will be closed; (g) that temporary accommodation, particularly former classroom huttred accommodation in poor condition, be removed whenever possible; and (h) that the current property portfolio of community halls and centres should not be extended and priority be given to the improvement of existing properties.

3. Sure Start Scotland

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the current range of projects in North Ayrshire funded by Sure Start Scotland including details of the Childcare Partnership Action Plan for future developments.

The Sure Start Scotland initiative was launched in 1999 with initial funding provided for 1999/2002. Funding will continue till 2007 and the funding for 2002/03 has been confirmed as £574,000. The Sure Start initiative is a key element of the Scottish Executive's Social Inclusion Strategy. It aims to promote social inclusion through a positive start in young children's lives, with a focus on the promotion of personal growth and development of the very youngest children (0-3) before they access pre-school education. The initiative also aims to develop community-based, family-focused resources which include high quality childcare and direct support to parents. In North Ayrshire the initiative is managed through the Childcare Partnership. Sure Start Scotland funding has been used to support a number of initiatives in North Ayrshire and an action plan outlining future developments was included in the Children's Services Plan 2002/04.

The Committee agreed to approve the Childcare Partnership's Action Plan for future developments as detailed in an appendix to the report.

4. New Community Schools

4.1 Evaluation

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the evaluation of the new community school pilot projects established in Auchenhavrie Academy and Irvine Royal Academy and their associated primary school clusters in 1999.

The pilot projects have greatly assisted in the establishment of effective partnership working and the lessons learned will assist in the roll out of the new community schools programme.

Noted.

4.2. Roll Out of the New Community School Approach

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress of the roll out of the New Community School approach to schools across North Ayrshire.

In addition to the initial funding allocation of £656,640 for 2002/03 and £738,720 in 2003/04 the Scottish Executive has confirmed that funding amounting to £820,000 per annum will be provided for 2004/05 and 2005/06 to support the roll out of the New Community School approach. Partner organisations have now nominated representatives to a multi-disciplinary steering group to be chaired by one of the three elected member representatives from the Council. An integrated development team is also being established which will be based at St. John's Primary School, Stevenston.

All school clusters have now submitted new community school roll out proposals for 2002/03 which demonstrate a new range of partnership working. Procedures for the monitoring and evaluation of the new community school roll out programme are also being developed and funding has been allocated to each cluster group for 2002/03 and 2003/04 based on the pupil roll, with an additional weighting for pupils receiving footwear and clothing grants.

The Committee agreed (a) to nominate Councillors McNamara, Munro and David Munn to serve on the multi-disciplinary steering group; and (b) that the group be chaired by Councillor McNamara.

5. National Priorities Action Fund

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the programme themes within the National Priorities Action Fund, together with details of the links between these themes and the programmes previously delivered under the Excellence Fund.

The Scottish Executive, Education Department and CoSLA established a Review Group to identify ways in which the programmes could be improved. The previous Excellence Fund programmes have now been brought under the new National Priority themes of school in the community, social justice, discipline and ethos, school infrastructure and new national qualifications. The Review Group has advised how the themes relate to the previous Excellence Fund initiatives. Details of the National Priorities Action Fund programme for 2002/03, and the programmes now to be included in Grant Aided Expenditure, were given in the report.

Noted.

6. Accessibility Strategy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the proposed introduction of an Implementation Plan to develop an Accessibility Strategy for pupils with disabilities.

The recent Education (Disabilities Strategies and Pupils' Records) Bill requires each local authority to prepare and implement an Accessibility Strategy to increase the access of pupils with disabilities to the curriculum, the physical environment of schools and to communications about the education service. The Accessibility Strategy must be prepared by 1 April 2003 and should cover a period of up to 3 years.

It is proposed that a multi-agency North Ayrshire Accessibility Planning Group be established which will draft the strategy, consult with parents and children, allocate appropriate resources and make arrangements for implementation, publicising, monitoring and review. A specialist consultant will be commissioned to assist in this process.

The financial costs of bringing all North Ayrshire schools up to modern physical access requirements have been estimated at £8.5m. Despite various sources of funding which will be provided by the Scottish Executive a significant shortfall is anticipated.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to produce an Accessibility Strategy.

7. Race Equality Policy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a draft Race Equality Policy for Educational Services in North Ayrshire.

Under the terms of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 local authorities have a duty to undertake the development and publication of a Race Equality Scheme by 30 November 2002 and to prepare a Race Equality policy on the Council's role as an Education authority. A Race Equality Scheme was approved by the Corporate Policy Committee on 29 October 2002 and a draft Race Equality Policy for Educational Services has now been prepared for consultation. The policy links to the Council's overall statement on equal opportunity and to its 2 existing policies on equal opportunities in employment and service provision.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the terms of the draft Race Equality Policy as detailed in the report; and (b) that a draft policy be issued for consultation.

8. Mod 2002

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the musical events organised by the Council's Arts and Cultural Services prior to and during the Mod 2002 held in Largs in October. Details were also provided on a comprehensive programme of cultural visits for Swedish and Spanish visitors.

Noted.

9. Adult Literacy and Numeracy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress to date in the implementation of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Plan.

From a national allocation of £22.5m of government funding to support Community Learning Partnerships and the creation of new learning opportunities for those seeking assistance with literacy and numeracy, the Council has been allocated £579,838 for the period 2001/04. The Council's Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan seeks to assist adults in the areas of private, family, community and working life literacies. The Plan also identifies the range and level of services that the Community Learning Strategy Partnership intends to provide for the period 2001/04.

The Committee agreed that the Corporate Director (Educational Services) submit an annual progress report on the implementation of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan.

10. Partners in Excellence

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on current and future developments in relation to the Partners in Excellence inter authority modern languages project.

As a result of a successful joint bid in 2000 by North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire and Argyll and Bute Councils, the three Councils have developed specialist provision for modern languages teaching. The Scottish Executive has recently confirmed an award of £370,000 in total to the three Councils in 2002/03. It has indicated its intention to review the specialist provision programme for 2003/04 and beyond.

The Partners in Excellence project provides senior students with modern languages in the 3 authorities with opportunities to develop their specialism through modern technology and innovative methods of delivery. It involves all 10 North Ayrshire secondary schools. A number of special events and developments have taken place to support learning and teaching within the project and an independent evaluation is currently being carried out.

The Committee agreed to approve the continued development of the Partners in

Excellence project in the terms outlined in the report.

11. HMIE Report: St. John's Primary School, Stevenston

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on St. John's Primary School, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the HMIE report.

12. Revenue Budget 2002/03: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Educational Services at the end of September 2002 and projections for the financial year 2002/03.

Arising from discussion, clarification was sought in relation to the level of expenditure associated with teachers staff costs.

The Committee agreed that the Corporate Director (Educational Services) report on the recruitment and availability of teachers to a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.