

Education Committee
23 January 1996

Irvine, 23 January 1996 - At a Meeting of the Education Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Thomas Morris, Irene Oldfather, Margaret Highet, Thomas Barr, Patrick Browne, James Clements, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, John Sillars, George Steven and Reverend John Taylor.

In Attendance

The Director of Education, the Heads of Education Services and a Corporate Policy Officer (Mrs. King).

Chair

Mr. Morris in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar, Samuel Gooding and Robert Rae.

1. Membership of the Education Committee

North Ayrshire Council's Education Committee currently comprises 17 elected members with representation from both the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church. There is, however, a statutory requirement to appoint a third Church representative. In addition, the Council has powers to appoint a representative of the teaching profession and other additional persons to a prescribed limit.

Submitted report by the Director of Education describing these additional categories of membership, recommending the inclusion of a teacher representative, and a parent representative within the additional persons category, and presenting proposals as to how nominations might be sought. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The Committee agreed to approve the additional membership outlined in the report and to authorise the Director of Education to take appropriate action to seek nominations.

2. Appeals Sub-Committee

Submitted report by the Chief Executive highlighting the need for the Committee to establish a mechanism to determine formal appeals which form part of the procedures in relation to school exclusions, bursary applications, placing requests and under age admissions. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish an Appeals Sub-Committee to determine

formal appeals to the Education Authority; (b) that the Sub-Committee comprise the Chair, Vice-Chairs, Mr. McNamara, Mr. Dickie and the ex officio members, from whom a Chair is to be nominated; and (c) that arrangements for its operation be reported to the first Meeting of the Sub-Committee.

3. Bursary Policy

Submitted report by the Director of Education recommending (a) Bursary Policies for the Summer Term of Academic Session 1995/96 and for the Academic Session 1996/97; and presenting (b) draft publications entitled "A Guide to Further Education and High School Bursaries 1996/97" which would detail North Ayrshire Council's Policy on Bursaries and "A Guide to Higher School Bursaries" for distribution to schools.

The Committee recognised the need to provide continuity of financial support for existing bursars and for students already attending schools outwith North Ayrshire. There was, however, some concern over the proposal to phase out bursaries to the small number of higher school pupils attending schools outwith North Ayrshire once current students had finished their schooling.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to continue the payment of bursaries to eligible students from North Ayrshire in accordance with the current Strathclyde Regional Council Bursary Policy during the summer term of Academic Session 1995/96; (b) to provide no financial support to students attending those colleges of further education in Scotland where funding is now being provided by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department; (c) to approve Policy amendments in the Academic Session 1996/97 in relation to allowances, contribution scales and, if appropriate, the payment mechanism; (d) that the Director of Education should consult adjoining authorities to ascertain whether reciprocal arrangements might be established in future to assist each others' students, and report in due course; and (e) that arrangements should be established to consider the granting of bursaries to certain students on an exceptional basis.

4. Pre-School Education

Submitted report by the Director of Education introducing further communications from the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department on Pre-School Education. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

North Ayrshire Council remains highly critical of the Nursery Voucher Scheme and has sought and secured assurances in relation to monitoring of the Scheme and local authority representation on the Pilot Steering Group. Informative Schemes which may include all or parts of the area covered by the Council require to be submitted by 16 February 1996.

The Committee agreed (a) that an Informative Scheme should now be submitted to SOEID covering (i) North Ayrshire and (ii) specific parts of North Ayrshire; and (b) that in view of the deadline for submissions, approval of the Scheme should be

remitted to the Chair of the Education Committee.

5. Partnership with School Boards

Submitted report by the Director of Education outlining proposals for establishing a formal partnership with parents. Copies of the report had previously been circulated.

Initial Meetings between officers and members of the Council and School Board representatives have influenced these proposals which suggest (a) the basic setting for formal dialogue should continue to be the School Board Meeting; (b) the establishment of Cluster Groups based on groupings of Secondary Schools and associated Primaries with an offer of two Meetings per year; (c) the establishment of a North Ayrshire School Board Forum meeting twice a year which could nominate the parent representatives to serve on the Education Committee; and (d) the formation of an Executive Committee with one representative from each Cluster Group which could liaise with the Forum's Education Committee representative.

Whilst the Committee accepted that School Boards represented the single most constant and formally recognised parent body within schools they did nonetheless emphasise that recognition must also be given to parents at large.

In conclusion the Committee agreed (a) to accept the outline proposals; (b) to authorise the Director of Education to (i) circulate these proposals for comment to all school boards and the five schools currently without Boards, (ii) arrange Meetings of School Board representatives to discuss the proposals further, (iii) determine the current position of School Boards within North Ayrshire and (iv) report on progress in due course.

6. Ayrshire Careers Service Partnership Ltd.

Submitted report by the Director of Education, copies of which had previously been circulated, explaining how the Careers Service will be delivered within Ayrshire after 1 April 1996 and the implications of this for North Ayrshire Council.

On the basis of the report the Committee agreed (a) to approve the participation of North Ayrshire Council in the Ayrshire Careers Service Partnership Company; (b) to approve the revision of the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association as detailed in the report; (c) that the role of the Company member at General Meetings be undertaken by the Director of Education (or an appropriate senior officer) from one of the three Ayrshire Councils; and (d) to nominate the Director of Education (or an appropriate senior officer) and the Vice-Chair, Miss Highet, to serve as Directors of the Ayrshire Careers Service Partnership Company.

7. Ayrshire Education Business Partnership Ltd

Submitted report by the Director of Education, copies of which had previously been circulated, on the responsibilities which the Ayrshire Authorities will inherit on 1 April 1996 as members of the Ayrshire Education Business Partnership Ltd.

On the basis of the report the Committee agreed (a) to approve the participation of North Ayrshire Council in the Ayrshire Education Business Partnership Ltd; (b) to approve the revision of the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the Company as detailed in the report; (c) that the role of Company member at General Meetings be undertaken by the Director of Education (or an appropriate senior officer) from one of the three Ayrshire Councils; and (d) to nominate the Director of Education (or an appropriate senior officer) and the Vice-Chair, Mrs. Oldfather, to serve as Directors on the Ayrshire Education Business Partnership Ltd.

8. Interim Adoption of Strathclyde Regional Council Policies

Submitted report by the Director of Education, copies of which had previously been circulated, recommending the adoption of SRC's current policies and guidelines for schools and other educational establishments during the transfer of responsibilities from SRC to North Ayrshire Council with provision being made for these policies, etc. to be reviewed on a phased basis.

The Committee agreed to adopt all current SRC Education Circulars, Policies and Guidelines until North Ayrshire Council has had an opportunity to consult on and consider their replacement.

9. Membership of Kilmarnock College Board of Management

The Committee agreed to nominate the Chair to serve on the Board of Management of Kilmarnock College.

10. Urgent Item

The Chair agreed that the following item be considered as a matter of urgency.

11. Revenue Budget 1996/97

Submitted report by the Chief Executive, copies of which had previously been circulated, on a decision of the Corporate Strategy Committee at its Meeting on 22 January 1996 to ask all Service Committees to determine how they will achieve a savings target which will prevent capping while protecting front line services.

The Committee agreed to remit to the Chair and Vice-Chairs in consultation with the Director to establish how these savings can be achieved and to report back to a Special Meeting in February.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.