

Cabinet
29 October 2013

IRVINE, 29 October 2013 - At a meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m. in Cunninghame House, Irvine.

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Marie Burns and Tony Gurney; Very Reverend M. Canon McManus and M. Fraser (Church Representatives); and E. Hawthorn (Youth Representative).

Also Present

John Bell, John Ferguson, Alex Gallagher, John Hunter, Ruth Maguire, Tom Marshall, Ronnie McNicol, Alan Munro, Donald Reid and Robert Steel.

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; Carol Kirk, Corporate Director, M. Docherty, Head of Education (3-18), S. Quinn, Head of Service Development, A. Sutton, Head of Community and Culture, F. Rodman, Senior Manager (Early Years and Childcare) and D. Carracher, Senior Manager (Inclusion) (Education and Skills); Y. Baulk, Head of Finance and Property (Finance and Corporate Support); L. McEwan, Corporate Communications Manager, K. Dyson, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

V. Maneely and N. McPherson (Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council); F. Stewart, G. Syme and D. Watson (Ardrossan Academy Parent Council); C. Larsen (Haysholm School Parent Council); and E. McTaggart (James McFarlane School Parent Council).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Bruce, Anthea Dickson and Alex McLean; E. Higon (Church Representative); G. Smith (Teaching Representative); and N. McDonald (Youth Representative).

1. Declarations of Interest

In terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors, Councillor Gurney, as parent of a pupil of Ardrossan Academy, declared an indirect, non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 2 (Outcome of 3 Towns Campus Consultation).

2. Outcome of 3 Towns Campus Consultation

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the outcome of the statutory public consultation on the proposal to develop an educational campus in Ardrossan by the amalgamation of Auchenharvie and Ardrossan Academies and Haysholm and James McFarlane Schools.

At its meeting on 9 October 2013, the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee considered a petition submitted by Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council in respect of the siting of the proposed 3 Towns Campus and heard from a deputation in support of the petition. The Committee agreed to recommend that the Cabinet invite the Petitioners to address the Cabinet (Education) in terms of the petition.

Representatives of Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council were duly invited to attend the meeting to address the Cabinet. In addition, the Parent Councils for the other schools affected by the proposals, namely Ardrossan Academy, Haysholm School and James McFarlane School, were also invited to address the meeting.

Veron Maneely and Nicola McPherson addressed the Cabinet on behalf of Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council, indicating their opposition to the proposals on the following grounds:-

- the close proximity of the preferred site to the existing St. Matthew's campus and the prospect of 3,000 pupils converging in the same vicinity at the same times throughout the day;
- the concentration of school and community facility within the one area and the loss of those facilities in Stevenston;
- the safety of pupils in terms of road safety, the lack of safe walking routes from Stevenston to the Ardrossan site and the increased walking distance for pupils from the Ardeer area;
- road congestion and parking issues at the Ardrossan site;
- the practicalities associated with sharing some resources with St. Matthew's Academy;
- the loss to the Stevenston community of its community hub at Auchenharvie, including after-school provision and the parent-led community sports club;
- the lack of space on the Ardrossan site for future expansion; and
- the likely negative impact on Stevenston, with regard to housing, crime, local businesses and community spirit.

Frances Stewart and Gloria Syme, accompanied by Donna Watson, then addressed the Cabinet on behalf of Ardrossan Academy Parent Council and made the following points:-

- Ardrossan Academy Parent Council's sympathy with the views expressed by representatives of Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council;
- the availability of leisure and sports facilities adjacent to the Auchenharvie site; and
- the importance, in view of the two academies reaching the end of their lifespan, of investing in provision for future generations.

Thereafter, Christina Larsen addressed the Cabinet and made the following points on behalf of Haysholm School Parent Council:-

- opposition to the proposals on the part of 60% of the school's parents, with this figure rising to 100% among the 15 families directly affected;
- the disadvantages of the proposed site, in terms of the loss of a small, friendly environment for pupils, the scale of the new building and associated difficulties for pupils with severe autism, the traffic congestion which might be encountered by emergency vehicles responding to calls in respect of medical emergencies, and the risk of bullying or mocking;
- concerns about the physical layout of the building, including the potential for overlooking of the outdoor area used by vulnerable pupils and design issues which might limit the natural daylight available; and
- the cost to the Council of parents opting out of the proposed campus in favour of private sector provision should the new facility fail to meet the needs of vulnerable pupils.

Elaine McTaggart then addressed the Cabinet on behalf of James McFarlane Parent Council and raised the following issues:-

- concern about the medical requirements of pupils, some of whom were subject to emergency medical protocols, and the ability of the proposed campus to meet those needs;
- parental support in principle for a new facility, given capacity issues surrounding the current provision, albeit with strong caveats;
- the preference for a merger between Haysholm and James McFarlane schools, with specialised facilities, such as a modern hydrotherapy pool, prioritised over issues such as inclusion;
- the distinction between the shared campus provision seen elsewhere, which aims to integrate pupils with mild to moderate special needs, and the current proposals, which would affect pupils with severe and complex special needs; and
- the importance of design/layout and facilities in determining whether the Parent Council could support the proposals.

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

- what constituted a "super-school" in the opinion of Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council;
- whether the resource sharing with St. Matthew's Academy, referred to by representatives of Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council, related to academic or sports provision;
- the validity of concerns about safe walking routes, given that pupils already walked from Stevenston to St. Matthew's Academy;
- Auchenharvie Academy Parent Council's expectations in terms of safe walking route provision;

- further information on the current community activities based at Auchenhavrie Academy;
- whether pupils with severe and complex special needs could share facilities with those with mild to moderate special needs; and
- the detailed design assumptions made by Haysholm School Parent Council with regard to the proposals.

In terms of Standing Order 6.8, the Chair adjourned the meeting for a short period to consider the representations made by representatives of the four Parent Councils. The meeting reconvened with the same Members, officers and deputation representatives present.

The Cabinet agreed, following the results of the public consultation and having listened to representatives from the schools affected (a) not to proceed any further with the current proposal; and (b) to instruct officers to develop new proposals to provide the highest quality education for our young people.

3. Supporting Small Schools in North Ayrshire

3.1 Corrie, Brodick and Pirnmill Primary Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) provided information on the successful pilot in respect of shared headship arrangements for Corrie, Brodick and Pirnmill Primary Schools on Arran; and (b) proposed the creation of a permanent shared headship between the three schools.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the management arrangement for a shared headship between Corrie, Brodick and Pirnmill Primary Schools.

3.2 Shiskine and Kilmory

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) provided information on the successful pilot in respect of shared headship arrangements for Shiskine and Kilmory Primary Schools on Arran; and (b) proposed the creation of a permanent shared headship between the two schools.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the management arrangements for a shared headship between Shiskine and Kilmory Primary Schools.

4. Delivery 600 Hours of Early Learning and Childcare: Review of Staffing Arrangements

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which outlined changes to early years staffing within primary and pre-school establishments in response to the Children and Young People's Bill, which is likely to place a duty on local authorities to increase the provision of early learning and childcare from the current 475 hours to a minimum of 600 hours delivered in a more flexible model from August 2014.

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

- any potential detriment to primary schools arising from the staff re-deployment;
- current early years staffing provision in primary schools;
- the views of head teachers in relation to the proposals; and
- the financial implications of the proposals.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) re-focus the teaching input for young children aged 3 to 6 by creating an early years support team consisting of the experienced early years teachers who work in early years centres and classes; and (b) re-locate the early intervention practitioners from the primary schools into early years establishments to ensure a fully qualified workforce is in place to deliver the increased provision of 600 hours of early learning and childcare by August 2014

5. Introduction of Scottish Statutory Instrument: Community Learning and Development 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) advised of the proposed Scottish Statutory Instrument for Community Learning and Development ("The Requirements of Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013"), the purpose of which is to strengthen the legislative basis of Community Learning and Development (CLD); and (b) outlined the responsibilities that will fall to the Education Authority as a result of the pending legislation.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the requirements that this legislation will make on North Ayrshire Council, its Community Planning partners and other CLD providers across North Ayrshire, including with respect to Curriculum for Excellence; and (b) receive a further report once the legislation has been implemented in North Ayrshire.

6. Curriculum for Excellence

6.1 Update Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) provided an update on the progress made in implementing Curriculum for Excellence, including staff training in the Solihull Approach, the embedding of formative assessment in everyday practice in schools, and engagement with teachers on the exemplification of a level material on the National Assessment Resource; and (b) set out how progress made by the Council in being measured and has been recognised nationally.

Noted.

6.2 Political Literacy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) which (a) gave information on the publication of the paper, Curriculum for Excellence: Political Literacy, which provides advice for practitioners and informs partners, learners and their parents of the place of political literacy within Curriculum for Excellence; and (b) provided an Advice Note for Schools on Political Literacy and the Referendum on Independence for Scotland, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

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

- whether a school debate would proceed in the event of an invited party withdrawing;
- a mock court hearings scheme involving Kilmarnock Sheriff Court and pupils from East Ayrshire and South Ayrshire; and
- whether the term "neutral" cited in the Advice Note equated to "balanced".

The Cabinet agreed (a) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) seek to obtain further information on the mock court hearings scheme based at Kilmarnock Sheriff Court and any potential for pupils from North Ayrshire to participate; and (b) otherwise, to note the content of the report.

7. Developing Scotland's Young Workforce

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Interim Report produced by the Wood Commission, which was set up by the Scottish Government with the task of making recommendations to ensure Scotland produces better qualified, work ready and motivated young people with skills relevant to modern employment opportunities both as the employees and entrepreneurs of the future.

Noted.

The Meeting ended at 4.05 p.m.