

Educational Services Committee  
9 January 2007

**IRVINE, 9 January 2007** - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 pm.

**Present**

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

**In Attendance**

I Snodgrass, Chief Executive, J Travers, Corporate Director, B Gardner, Head of Education Resources, J Leckie and J Ward, Heads of Service, M McLarty, Manager(Culture and Lifelong Learning) (Educational Services), J Paul, Head of Technical Services (Property Services), H Hunter, Principal Accountant, G Lawson, Corporate Support Manager, P Shiach, Corporate Support Officer and A Wattie, Communications Officer (Chief Executives)

**Also In Attendance**

F Keddlity, Chief Executive (North Ayrshire Leisure Trust),

**Chair**

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Jacqueline Browne, Gordon Allison, Alan Hill and Father Matthew McManus

**1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 7 November 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

In terms of Standing Orders, Councillors Dewar and Marshall declared an interest in item 3 and took no part in the discussion thereon.

**3. North Ayrshire Leisure Limited: Business Plan 2007/08**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on North Ayrshire Leisure Limited Business Plan for 2007/08 and to agree the level of financial support to be provided by the Council.

Following its formation in January 2000, as a corporate body with charitable status, North Ayrshire Leisure Limited (NALL) established a Service Level Agreement with the Council for the provision of sport and leisure within North Ayrshire.

The operational aspects of the service were detailed within the Business Plan which is submitted on an annual basis for approval and financial support. The Plan reported on the current position and proposals for the following year and the Committee was given a presentation thereon by the Chief Executive, North Ayrshire Leisure Trust, which covered all aspects of the Plan. The Company requested a contribution from the Council of £4,009,175 for the financial year 2007/2008 which represented a reduction of £88,808 on the previous year, resulting in the Council contributing 49.9% of the budgeted turnover. Thereafter the Chief Executive North Ayrshire Leisure Trust invited questions on the content of the presentation and the Business Plan.

Several members commented on the practice of producing Annual Plans and requested that consideration be given to future plans covering a three year period.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the North Ayrshire Leisure Limited Business Plan for 2007/2008; and (b) financial support of £4,009,175 in 2007/2008 subject to finalisation of the Council's budget.

#### **4. NEET Strategy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress in taking forward the Not in Education Employment of Training Strategy in North Ayrshire.

Previously the Committee approved a strategy being developed to reduce the numbers of young people in the NEET category. The report proposed that this strategy, which had subsequently been approved by the Scottish Executive and further developed in conjunction with Careers Scotland, Scottish Enterprise, JobCentre Plus and other partners, now be implemented.

The aim of the strategy involved preventing young people from becoming NEET, and assisting those already in that position, and the report detailed the key priorities designed to achieve those aims.

The Committee agreed to approve the implementation of the proposals set out in the report.

#### **5. Determined to Succeed: Additional Funding**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a successful bid for additional funding to extend the range of vocational provision available in North Ayrshire schools.

The Scottish Executive, in May 2006, made available to local authorities an additional £2 million to achieve the delivery of vocational learning opportunities. The Council submitted a bid for this funding and has received confirmation of an allocation of £75,780, over two years, to support projects outlined in the bid.

Details of the vocational areas covered and the programmes to be provided were

contained within the report. The costs relating to the individual programmes were contained within an appendix thereto.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the recommendations outlined to use the additional funding; and (b) the opportunities for young people to participate in work-based vocational learning activities as outlined.

## **6. Largs Outdoor Sports Facilities**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a financial contribution towards improvements to sports fields in the Largs area and to agree a programme of works.

Following an agreement with the developer, land at Brisbane Glen, Largs, previously reserved for development as sports fields, was released for a housing development, with the developer making available £300,000 for the improvement of outdoor sports provision in the Largs area. Discussions subsequently took place between Educational Services and NALL to identify the most appropriate areas for development, with sites at Inverclyde Sports Centre and Bowencraig football pitches being highlighted as potential areas for improvement.

The report proposed that the development fund be directed towards the undernoted projects:-

- 1) The creation of a new grass pitch within the Inverclyde Sports Centre,
- 2) A contribution to the building of a new changing facility within the Inverclyde Sports Centre, and
- 3) Improving the quality of the playing fields at Bowencraig.

It was further proposed that officers from Sportscotland and Educational Services agree management, access and operational arrangements to enable the local community to access these facilities.

The Committee agreed (a) that the funds be used (i) to create a football pitch within the Inverclyde Sports Centre (ii) in providing a £300,000 contribution to a changing facility at the centre and (iii) towards improving the Bowencraig playing fields; and (b) to further discussions with Sportscotland and local groups regarding the management of sports facilities in the Largs area.

## **7. Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress in preparing for the new Parent Councils.

Previously the Committee approved transitional arrangements put in place for the preparation of the new Parent Councils to be established from August 2007 in terms of the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006.

The Scottish Executive has issued guidance on the Act and a toolkit of practical resources, and details of the measures undertaken to inform parents/carers of the

implications of the Act were contained within the report.

Following the establishment by Learning and Teaching Scotland of a Parent Partnership fund, from which a maximum of three bids from local authorities for funding is invited, North Ayrshire submitted bids on behalf of Glebe Primary School, Skermorlie Primary School and Largs Academy. The Academy received £2000 from the Fund, and the project from the other two schools will be supported from the additional funding to support parental involvement.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the progress in taking forward the Parental Involvement Act; and (b) to approve the further developments planned.

## **8. Appointment of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Scottish Executive consultation on the draft Parental Involvement in Headteacher and Depute Headteacher Appointment Regulations 2007 and seeking Committee approval for proposed response.

New provisions in relation to the appointment of Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers are contained within the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 and will come into effect from August 2007.

The Scottish Executive previously consulted on what should be included in the Regulations, and following a review of the responses, Draft Regulations have been issued by Ministers and the final part of the consultation exercise.

The proposals contained within the Draft Regulations, and the proposed response thereon by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) were detailed in the report.

The report also indicated that there will be future costs associated with the training of Parent Councils, who will require operational budgets to establish and maintain their communications strategies with the wider parent body. The duty to consult will also have a cost implication in terms of advertising costs and greater demands on officer time.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the report; and (b) that the consultation response included within the report be submitted to the Scottish Executive.

## **9. Local History Service**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a proposal to relocate the Local History Service from Library HQ, Ardrossan to the Vennel Gallery, Irvine.

The Local History Unit is currently based in the Library Headquarters in Princes Street, Ardrossan. The accommodation is now no longer suitable for purpose due to restricted public access and inadequate storage facilities.

The current position and proposals to relocate the unit, including the relocation of the

Irvine Burgh Minutes and significant Robert Burns texts to the Vennel Gallery, Irvine were detailed in the report. The report also indicated that all costs relating to the proposed transfer of the Unit can be met from current budgets with future development and upgrading of the museum as a Burns and Local History Heritage Centre being the subject of a bid to the Lottery Heritage Fund in 2007.

The Committee, Councillor Wallace dissenting, agreed (a) to approve the relocation of the Local History Service; and (b) to receive progress reports on the impact of the new facility.

## **10. Health Promoting Schools Accreditation**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on current developments in relation to Health Promotion in Schools.

In October 2006, North Ayrshire's Health Promoting Schools Accreditation was approved by the National Endorsement Team. Following accreditation, schools are required to undertake a variety of activities and actions, as detailed in the report.

The report also indicated that the Health Promoting Schools initiative can be delivered within existing Educational Services and NHS budgets.

The Committee agreed to the proposals for developing the Health Promoting Schools Accreditation Scheme across North Ayrshire.

## **11. Educational Services Budget 2006/07: Budgetary Control**

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Educational Services at the end of November 2006 and projections to the end of financial year 2006/07.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the year end projected overspend based on current information; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Educational services) take the necessary action to bring the budget back on target.

## **12. McLellan Centenary Year**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on arrangements to celebrate a local playwright, Robert McLellan.

Members of the Arran Theatre and Arts Trust have expressed a desire to acknowledge, in his centenary year, the creative influence of local playwright Robert McLellan in the development of literature and drama in Scotland. A programme of events to mark the Centenary Year was detailed in the report.

The Arran Theatre and Arts Trust has obtained awards from a variety of sources to fund the proposals.

The Committee agreed to approve the timetable of activities organised to commemorate Robert McLellan.

### **13. Arran Outdoor Centre**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a joint venture with the Forestry Commission Scotland on Arran.

The Forestry Commission Scotland own a number of steadings in forests in Arran which are in a poor condition and are effectively disused.

The Commission has approached the Council with proposals to redevelop these properties into bothies, the first being the property at Glenrickard which would be redeveloped on the basis of a joint investment to make the building safe and secure for use, and would offer an additional resource to the Arran Outdoor Education Centre. A previous joint venture to create the Cloudbase facility on Arran proved successful.

In addition, an agreement would require to be reached between the Commission and the Council in respect of the amount of exclusive access to be afforded to each party. A proposed Concordat between Arran Outdoor Education and The Forestry Commission Scotland was appended to the report.

The Forestry Commission Scotland has indicated its willingness to joint fund the restoration of the first bothy, estimated at several thousand pounds per partner, which Educational Services can match fund from within the current capital plan.

The Committee agreed to a joint venture with the Forestry Commission Scotland which will result in two bothies being available for use by the Arran Outdoor Centre.

### **14. Education at Home**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the current consultation being undertaken by the Scottish executive on the Guidance on Circumstances in which Parents May Choose to Educate their Children at Home.

Section 37 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 requires the local authority to ensure that those parents or guardians who educate at home are providing efficient and appropriate education for the children. Guidance in this regard issued by the Scottish executive in 2004 is currently the subject of a consultation exercise. The Council's response seeks clarification on a number of issues as well as some concerns and the proposed response to the consultation was detailed in the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the response to the consultation.

### **15. Ardeer Quarry Wildlife Site**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a proposal to seek Scottish Natural Heritage's approval for the declaration of the Ardeer Quarry wildlife site a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).

Following its establishment in 1979, the Friends of Ardeer Youth Group undertook

various projects including the creation of a wildlife site at Ardeer Quarry. The conservation work undertaken has improved the biodiversity of the site and created an educational resource for schools, youth groups and other interested parties.

The Friends of Ardeer Youth Group, with the assistance of the Ranger Service, now intend to consult with Scottish Natural Heritage with a view to gaining Local Nature Reserve status for part of the site, as outlined in a plan attached to the report. Such status would afford the site some protection from inappropriate development, as it would be safeguarded through the active management of its habitats and would also become eligible for various grants to help improve and conserve the area.

The implications in respect of the proposal were detailed in the report.

Additionally, the project links into the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, contributes to sustainable development and is compatible with Council policy.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal for the Friends of Ardeer Conservation Group and the North Ayrshire Countryside Ranger Service to pursue the creation of a Local Nature Reserve at the Ardeer Quarry site.

#### **16. Largs Academy: IT Building**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the construction of a suite of IT Classrooms at Largs Academy.

The Committee agreed to accept the recommended tender, that submitted by Interactive Contracts Group in the amended sum, after checking and the provision of Additional Provisional Sums for wet weather provision, of £1,565,425.27.

#### **17. Synthetic Grass Multi Usage Games Areas: Ardrossan Academy and Irvine Royal Academy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the construction of synthetic grass multi usage games areas at Ardrossan Academy and Irvine Royal Academy.

The Committee agreed to accept the recommended tender, that submitted by G Thornton (Contracts) Ltd, in the amended sum, after checking, of £373,748.55, subject to the grant of the required planning permissions.

The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m.