

Education Committee
28 October 1997

Irvine, 28 October 1997 - 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, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Stef Holmer, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, David O'Neill, Evelyn Sillars, John Sillars, Gordon Smith, George Steven and Reverend John Taylor.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive; The Director of Education, B. Gardner, Head of Education Resources, J. Leckie, J. Tulips and L. Owens, Heads of Education Services, A. Bruce, Assistant Head Teacher, Arran High School, J. Calvert, Head Teacher, James MacFarlane School (Education); D. Nibloe, Principal Officer, Accountancy (Financial Services); and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Morris in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne, Thomas Dickie, Samuel Gooding, Alan Munro and Robert Rae.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Arran High School Involvement in Feis Arainn

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Feis Arainn festival of Gaelic music and culture held at Arran High School.

Members viewed a video of the Feis Arainn held in June 1997. The main emphasis of the event was to bring an awareness of the Gaelic cultural heritage and language to the people of Arran in general, and young people in particular, and to bring new skills in traditional music. The event was organised by a Steering Committee comprising teachers from Arran High School and community representatives.

The Committee agreed to congratulate the Steering Committee on their considerable commitment in making the Feis Arainn 1997 such a success.

3. The Elaborated Curriculum

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the joint development work undertaken by North, South and East Ayrshire staff in the production of an appropriate curriculum in schools for children with complex learning difficulties.

Guidance was issued by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department in 1994 re-emphasising the relevance of the 5-14 curricular structure for special schools, but suggesting

that guidelines for each curricular area should be developed by schools themselves. A group of 4 Head Teachers from schools with complex and multiple learning difficulties in North, South and East Ayrshire has, therefore, over the past 2 years, been co-operating in developing an appropriate curricular framework in this area. This has been titled "The Elaborated Curriculum" to reflect its adaptation, expansion and elaboration for the benefit of pupils with complex learning difficulties. The benefits of this co-operation have been the sharing of this major task, the expertise available and the avoidance of duplication of effort. The Elaborated Curriculum guidelines have now been issued to all special schools in Ayrshire, all peripatetic staff providing learning support and all Psychological Services. It is intended to continue this shared approach where it provides better practice and best value.

The Committee agreed to approve the continued liaison between the relevant staff of North, South and East Ayrshire Councils to allow ongoing development of programmes of study for children with complex and multiple learning difficulties.

4. Partnership with Parents: Evaluation Report

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the evaluation of the Parent Partnership Initiative.

On 5 August 1997, the Committee approved proposals to carry out a wider evaluation exercise on the Parent Partnership Initiative, involving Schools Boards. The evaluation has now been completed and has concluded that the Parent Partnership Initiative has been very successful. The Education Newsletter issued to School Boards was welcomed, as was the parental representative on the Education Committee, the Parent Executive Committee, and the School Board Forum and Cluster meetings. However, there were some suggestions that there were too many meetings too close together.

It was proposed therefore to maintain the broad elements of the Parent Partnership Initiative including the Newsletter, Parental Executive Committee and Forum and Cluster meetings, but to make some minor adjustments to the pattern of meetings. A timetable has therefore been drawn up to give a spread of meetings across the school year. Elected Members will also be invited to attend.

The Committee agreed to approve the following proposals for an amended pattern of Cluster and Forum meetings in support of the Parent Partnership Initiative:-

- i. November - North Ayrshire School Boards Forum; (Evening)
- ii. February - Three Area Cluster Meetings (Arran: Three Towns/Largs: Irvine/Kilwinning/Garnock); (Evening)
- iii. March - Special School Cluster Meeting; (Evening) and
- iv. May - North Ayrshire School Boards Forum. (Daytime Conference)

5. New Deal for Schools: Revenue Resources

Submitted report by the Director of Education on additional revenue resources available through the Budget 1997 New Deal for Schools Programme and proposed projects to be funded from this resource.

Under this Programme the Government has allocated a sum of £443,000 to North Ayrshire Council, intended to be spent as capital from current revenue. The Secretary of State has indicated that in applying for these funds, Councils will be invited to set out general "spend to save" investments in their Education service, where possible indicating the level of savings to be achieved. A number of proposals have, therefore, been drawn up which will meet this criteria, viz:-

Outline Description of Project	Expenditure
1. Electricity power factor correction capacitors	£20,000

2.	Water meter charges	£63,000
3.	Anti-vandalism measures	£100,000
4.	School telephone systems	£60,000
5.	Property asset management	£20,000
6.	Conversion of coal boilers to gas	£140,000
7.	Lighting conversion and control	£40,000

In relation to anti-vandalism measures, risk assessments are currently being undertaken in all schools which will indicate the appropriate types of anti-vandalism measures required.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the allocation of the revenue funds of £443,000 under the new deal for schools to the projects as outlined above; (b) to instruct the Director of Education to (i) submit a report on the number of coal boilers requiring to be converted with costs, and investigate obtaining further funding from the Scottish Office for this purpose under the smokeless zone criteria; and (ii) investigate what measures are available to assist schools on anti-litter proposals; and (c) to note that a report on anti-vandalism measures proposed at specific schools will be submitted to Committee once the risk assessments have been completed.

6. New Deal for Schools: Capital Resources

Submitted report by the Director of Education on additional capital resources available through the Budget 1997 New Deal for Schools Programme and proposed projects to be funded from this resource.

The Government has allocated to North Ayrshire Council £263,000 in 1997/98 and £788,000 in 1998/99 and the 3 subsequent financial years to be spent on capital works on schools which are in addition to the investment in schools being made from other resources available to the Council, with priority to be given to (a) the renewal, repair or improvement of school buildings including (i) repair or replacement of buildings in poor condition; (ii) replacement of outside toilets and other external or temporary accommodation; and (iii) adaptation or refurbishment of buildings for educational use; and (b) enhancing facilities for new technology. In the light of the £263,000 allocated for 1997/98 requiring to be spent by the end of this financial year, it is considered that this allocation should be made to projects which are already well advanced. It is proposed therefore that the funds be allocated to (a) additional facilities at the new Castlepark Nursery for which there is already an allocation in the Capital Programme, to allow the provision of nursery education for all children in the area, including those with special educational needs who currently attend Moor Nursery at a cost of £105,000; (b) the provision of further facilities at Gateside Primary School in addition to the allocation in the current Capital Programme for an additional area at the school, to include the integration of the external toilets and expansion of the additional educational area to provide a gym/dining hall at a cost of £95,000; and (c) the creation of an Information and Communications Technology infrastructure within 2 secondary schools at a cost of £63,000.

Using the same criteria specified by the Secretary of State for allocating these funds, it is proposed that the £788,000 which is being made available for 1998/99 be allocated to the following projects:-

Project	Expenditure
Brodick Primary School - Removal of Outside Toilets	£160,000

Fairlie Primary School - Nursery Provision	£200,000
Information Communication and Technology - Network Infrastructure	£163,000
Major Maintenance:	
James Reid School, Saltcoats - Completion of Re-roofing	£20,000
Moorpark Primary School, Kilbirnie - Re-roofing	£20,000
St. Mark's Primary School, Irvine - Structural Upgrade	£40,000
Garnock Academy - Re-roofing	£110,000
St. Andrew's Academy, Saltcoats - Further phase of structural upgrade (windows and fascia)	£75,000

With regard to the proposed information and communications technology infrastructure within 2 secondary schools in 1997/98, no decision has yet been taken on the particular schools, but consultation will be undertaken with Information Technology Services to determine which are most appropriate.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the allocation of £263,000 in 1997/98 and £788,000 in 1998/99 to the projects outlined above; and (b) that a meeting be held between Mr. Dewar, the Local Member and appropriate officers to discuss the Castlepark Nursery proposals in more detail.

7. Craft Artist in Residence

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a successful proposal for funding which was submitted to the Scottish Arts Council.

The Scottish Arts Council administers an Artist in Residence Scheme which is designed to promote crafts activity in schools. Following a successful bid for funding under this scheme, a Craft Artist will be commencing in January 1998 to work with Abbey, Blacklands, Corsehill, Pennyburn and Whitehirst Park Primary Schools in Kilwinning for a 4 month period. The residency will focus on primary 6 pupils and will involve an introduction to the craft of ceramics, a demonstration of basic ceramic techniques and the production of pupil work. This work will tie in with the 5-14 expressive arts curriculum and in addition, the Craft Artist will provide workshops for teachers, thus providing a long-term benefit for North Ayrshire schools.

The Committee agreed (a) that a further report be submitted on the outcome of the project; and (b) to approve further bids for external funding to support arts developments in schools.

8. Staffing Support to Combat Educational Disadvantage

Submitted report by the Director of Education on options for the allocation of staffing resources to combat educational disadvantage.

On 16 September 1997, the Committee agreed (a) to approve in principle the use of eligibility for footwear and clothing grants as the determining factor in allocating additional support to schools to counteract the effects of social disadvantage; and (b) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting on the options available for re-prioritisation and targeting of resources. In the current financial year, there are 25.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff available to

provide additional support to combat educational disadvantage and these are currently allocated to schools on the basis of the number of pupils residing in an Area of Priority Treatment (APT). Following the Education Committee's decision on 16 September, a number of models have been drawn up for consideration as the basis for re-allocating the staffing resource. A detailed description of each model and the resultant effects of each on the staffing allocation was provided in the report. A detailed explanation was also given of the various options including the staffing implications if 5 FTE staff were retained from the total allocation to support specific policy initiatives. Members would be involved in determining such policy initiatives which would be subject to monitoring and evaluation as would the model selected, and as previously reported, alterations are to be phased to allow schools to adjust to the redistribution of support which will be required.

After a full discussion on the merits of each option, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the model set out in Appendix 5a to the report viz. the policy initiative model plus model 1(pro rata); and (b) to approve the implementation of model 5a on a phased basis over 2 years from the start of academic session 1998/99.

9. Surplus Property: Land at Glengarnock Primary School

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposal to declare surplus to requirements a piece of land at Glengarnock Primary School, Glengarnock.

The owner of the property adjoining the school wishes to purchase a small piece of land at the school to include in his garden area. The land in question lies outwith the new perimeter fence at the rear of the school and could be released subject to the condition that the new owner erect a suitable fence to allow for a 2.5m "right of way" footpath between the school perimeter fence and the area of land in question.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the area of land as detailed in the report surplus to requirements; and (b) remit to the Support Services Committee to approve the terms of disposal.

10. Placing Request Arrangements: Response to Scottish Office Consultation

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed response to the SOEID's request for views on the current arrangements for placing requests.

Within North Ayrshire, the vast majority of placing requests can be granted. There are, however, aspects of the current legislation and associated guidelines which are causing confusion for many parents and require further clarification, viz. (i) the definition of the capacity of a school and individual teaching areas; (ii) when additional staff have to be employed; (iii) the definition of the term "seriously detrimental" in the context of the criterion "would granting the request be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education, or the well being of children already at the school, or to order and discipline at the school?"; and (iv) the restriction of the scope to retain places for incoming families to relatively few schools given the application of the statutory walking distances to school. It is intended to respond to SOIED highlighting these areas of concern.

The Committee agreed to the proposed response.

11. Early Intervention Programme: Progress Report

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the progress made in the implementation of the Early Intervention Programme in North Ayrshire.

The Staff Tutor and the Research Assistant have now been appointed, assessment materials have been purchased and all children in primaries 1 and 2 of the schools involved in the programme are currently having their literacy skills assessed. Staff development and training is continuing and an Early Intervention Conference held on 29 September was attended by

Members, Officers, Advisers and staff of participating schools.

Noted.

12. HMI Nursery Inspection Reports

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the findings of the inspections undertaken by HMI on a sample of nurseries in North Ayrshire.

The nurseries inspected were Brisbane Primary School nursery class, the nursery classes at Corrie, Kilmory, Pirnmill and Shiskine schools and Kilwinning Community Nursery. The report by HMI identifies a number of strengths and makes some recommendations, but it was in general a very favourable report. In this case, there will be no follow-up visit by HMI but a progress report will be sought from each nursery in the next 1 to 2 years. The key points for action will be addressed by the Head Teacher of each nursery who will work in conjunction with the Early Years Adviser during the next year.

Noted.

13. Revenue/Budgetary Control Report for Period 1 April to 12 September 1997

Submitted report by Director of Financial Services on the financial position of the Department against its previously agreed budget as at 12th September 1997.

On 21 October 1997, the Corporate Strategy Committee agreed that Service Committees should receive information on their own revenue budgetary position at regular intervals. The figures as at 12 September 1997 for the Education Directorate indicated that there is at present an underspend of £508,000, but projections indicated that an overspend of £542,000 will occur by the end of the financial year.

The Committee agreed to remit to the Chair in consultation with the Director of Education to identify measures to rectify the situation and report to the Corporate Strategy Committee on 26 November 1997.

The Meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.