

Education Committee
21 April 1998

Irvine, 21 April 1998 - 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, John Donn, Stef Holmer, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Alan Munro, Robert Rae, Gordon Smith, George Steven and Reverend John Taylor.

In Attendance

The Director of Education, B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources, J. Leckie, J. Tulips and L. Owens, Heads of Education Services, J. Ward, Adviser (Education); D. Nibloe, Principal Officer, Accountancy (Financial Services); M. McCormick, Media Relations Officer, S. King, Corporate Policy Officer and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Morris in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie, Evelyn Sillars and John Sillars.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 10 March 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Arion Study Visit to North Ayrshire

Submitted report by the Director of Education on an Arion Study Visit to North Ayrshire between 8-13 March 1998 on the theme "Quality in Education" which involved 13 educationists from a variety of European countries.

The arrangements, which included presentations on the Scottish Education system on the policies adopted by the Education Committee in relation to Quality Assurance, also involved the participants in visiting a range of primary and secondary schools within the Authority and producing a group report presenting their observations in relation to Quality Assurance in Education and commenting favourably on the overall organisation of the programme.

The Committee agreed to commend the organisers on the success of the visit.

3. Higher Still Development Project: Home Economics

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposed joint project to support Home Economics which is to be undertaken in partnership with the Higher Still Development Unit.

Under these proposals three Principal Teachers from North Ayrshire schools will review and adapt existing Scotvec module materials to meet the specifications of the Higher Still Home Economics Units. The Council's contribution to the project will be in the form of staff expertise and

time while the project costs, amounting to £2,000, will be met by the Higher Still Development Unit.

The Committee agreed to approve the joint project.

4. Higher Still Geography Video Resource

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposed joint project to produce a video resource for Higher Still Geography which is to be undertaken in partnership with the Higher Still Development Unit.

The proposal involves the inclusion of a video resource to complement a package of support materials for geographical methods and techniques, currently being produced by the Unit. The video concerned, which was designed by an instructor at the Arran Outdoor Education Resource, will assist in the development of the skills and techniques related to undertaking a river study and is relevant to Higher Still Geography Courses. It could also be used as an aid to staff development for geography teachers by demonstrating river study skills and techniques and could additionally be utilised by both teachers and pupils in the classroom, prior to engaging in actual fieldwork activities. In view of wider use of this resource the Higher Still Development Unit has agreed to meet the costs of £4,500.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the joint project in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) that arrangements be made for members to view the video.

5. Policy Principles for Special Educational Needs

Submitted report by the Director of Education presenting an Educational Needs Policy Statement and recommending the development and production of a comprehensive guide to Special Educational Needs policy, provision and procedures.

On 5 March 1996 the Committee approved a report outlining the provision made for children with special educational needs together with some of the current issues in special needs education, and agreed that the Council should produce its own policy. Proposals have now been drawn up for the introduction of such a policy, the main influences on which have been derived from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Children (Scotland) Act, 1995 and the Council's own Equal Opportunities Policy and from which it is possible to draw up principles to characterise the Council's policy provision in the area of special educational needs and learning support viz:-

- Inclusiveness and Anti-Discrimination;
- Equity and Best Value;
- Flexibility and Partnership; and
- Professionalism and Quality.

Full details were given on the proposed policy, incorporating these principles and from this it will be possible to provide a comprehensive, up-to-date and coherent account of provision and procedure in this complex area of education. It is therefore intended to produce a comprehensive North Ayrshire Guide to Special Educational Needs policy, provision and procedures for widespread distribution.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve this Statement of Policy; (b) to authorise the production of a comprehensive Guide; and (c) that the Director of Education report to a future meeting on the production of the draft Guide.

6. HMI report: Garnock Academy

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the findings of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools following inspections of business studies, drama, physics and S1/S2 Science at Garnock Academy in November and December 1997 as part of their national sample of secondary education.

The report commended numerous aspects of provision, provided details of the main recommendations identified in the inspection report and detailed proposals made to address the key points for action which the inspection had raised.

The Committee agreed to approve these proposals.

7. Sex Education in Schools

Submitted report by the Director of Education on (i) the current arrangements for sex education in North Ayrshire Schools; and (ii) a proposal to establish a working group to review and make recommendations on sex education policy and practice.

Responsibility for the school curriculum in Scotland, including the provision of sex education, currently rests with Education Authorities and Head Teachers. The Government's policy is to encourage schools to address sex education matters through a comprehensive programme of health education. The report confirms, however, that despite the existence of much appropriate educational material and the guaranteed place of sex education within the general curricular guidelines there are grounds for concern regarding the overall structure of the approach being taken.

The Committee agreed therefore (a) to approve the establishment of a short life Member/Officer Working Group to make recommendations on sex education policy and practice; (b) that membership of the group comprise Councillor I. Oldfather, Councillor D. Munn, education staff and representation from Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care NHS Trust; and (c) that the Director of Education report to a future meeting on the findings of the Working Group.

8. Composite Classes in Primary Schools

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals to provide advice to Head Teachers and information to parents and school boards on composite classes in primary schools within North Ayrshire.

The report outlined the circumstances which could lead to the formation of composite classes and presented the proposed advice which in future should be given to Head Teachers on the composition of classes with emphasis being placed on the need to ensure that parents and school boards are kept fully informed in this regard.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the terms of the advice proposed for Head Teachers on deciding the composition of classes which contain more than one year group; (b) that school boards be kept fully informed of any ongoing developments in relation to the formation of such classes within their own schools; (c) that a detailed information leaflet on composite classes be prepared for parents; and (d) that detailed advice be prepared for teachers and school boards on composite classes.

9. Appeals Committees: Additional Membership

Submitted report by the Director of Education seeking approval for representation on Appeals Committees from members of Local Attendance Councils.

The Committee agreed to authorise the inclusion of the following nine members to the lists

from which Appeal Committee members are chosen:-

Ms. Yvonne McClure, 31 Fudstone Drive, Kilbirnie;

Mrs. A. Hutchison, Marine House, Lamlash, Isle of Arran;

Ms. F. MacDonald, 18 Benlister Terrace, Lamlash, Isle of Arran;

Richard McMaster, Springfield, Bennan, Isle of Arran;

Ann Caldwell, Kilmory House, Lagg, Isle of Arran;

Mr. Stewart Durham, 28 High Road, Stevenston;

Elizabeth Wilkinson, 8 Greenhead Avenue, Stevenston;

Louise McKellar, 32 Hyslop Road, Stevenston; and

Mrs. Irene Irving, 14 Tollhouse Way, Irvine.

10. Grants to Organisations Supporting Curricular Provision in Schools

Submitted report by the Director of Education on grants to organisations supporting curricular provision in schools.

The Committee agreed to award the following grants for the financial year 1998/99:-

Organisation	Grant Awarded	Purpose
Scottish Development Education Centre	£50.00	Subscription for development materials and literature
Scottish Council for Educational Technology	£700.00	Development support for new technology
Scottish Council for Research in Education	£700.00	Access to research findings in education
Scottish Parent Teacher Council	£100.00	Parent support group on educational issues.
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	£450.00	Provision of resource packs for pupils

11. Education Provision in Irvine

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the outcome of the consultation on a proposal to build a new primary school within the Lawthorn area of Irvine and amend the catchment area of Towerlands Primary School.

Eight letters which were received in response to the consultative document were in the main supportive of the proposals and steps have been and will be taken to address areas where concerns had been expressed.

A response by the Architectural Services Manager indicated that in the short term there is a need only for a single stream school but that in the event of a double stream school being required at a future stage, he considers it would be advantageous and in line with Best Value to construct ancillary spaces such as gymnasium, dining hall and non teaching areas to a standard which would serve the future double stream school. The additional capital costs involved in this approach would be £400,000 in the financial year 1999-2000.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the building of a new primary school within the Lawthorn area of Irvine; (b) to authorise the amendment to the catchment area of Towerlands Primary School; and (c) to refer the additional capital costs to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration.

12. North Ayrshire: Marburg Area Link

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a further funding source which has been identified to enable an exchange of teachers to take place with the UK/Germany Area Links Initiative between the Council and the Education Department of Marburg, Mittel-Hessen.

The Committee agreed to approve the continued development of the Initiative.

13. Funding of Pre-School Education

Submitted report by the Director of Education confirming (A) the new funding arrangements which the Government has introduced for pre-school education in the 1998/99 school session following widespread consultation and (B) the implications which this will have in North Ayrshire.

The estimated number of children in their pre-school year for 1998/99 in North Ayrshire is approximately 1700 and the indicative allocation of grant for the provision of places to eligible pre-school children for the first 2 terms of the 1998/99 school year is £1,291,240. The Council will provide places for up to 1200 in their pre-school year and the remaining 500 places will be commissioned from the voluntary and private sectors. Thirty-five voluntary and private sector groups in North Ayrshire have been validated by the Scottish Office to provide nursery education. A further grant of £76,446 has been allocated to North Ayrshire for one year only to provide nursery places and ancillary support services for children in rural areas.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the new funding arrangements; and (b) to approve the arrangements proposed for commissioning nursery places from within the private and voluntary sectors.

14. Pre-5 Voluntary Sector Grants 1998/99

Submitted report by the Director of Education on grants to voluntary organisations providing pre-5 services.

The Committee agreed to approve the undernoted grants:-

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Organisation	Award 1998/99
Scottish Pre-School Play Association	£5,000.00
Scottish Childminding Association	£1,200.00
One Plus - One Parent Families	£2,700.00
Action for Sick Children	£100.00
Mobile Projects Association	£50.00
Parkhouse Playgroup SEN	£4,000.00 (interim award subject to finalisation of programme)

15. School Transport: Special Educational Needs and Medical Needs

Submitted report by the Director of Education confirming 323 tenders received in respect of (i) 34 single year transport contracts for 1998/99; and (ii) 47 two year contracts for 1998/99 and 1999/2000 to convey pupils with medical/special educational needs to school.

Although tenders were received for all contracts six of these will require to be re-advertised leaving the total value of the remaining 29 single year contracts at £50,141.95 and the total value of the remaining 46 two year contracts at £551,716.40 at a cost per annum of £275,858.20.

The Committee agreed (a) to the awarding of contracts as proposed in the report; (b) that two contracts be awarded to two firms who submitted multiple bids which were the cheapest overall; (c) that in 10 instances contracts be awarded to the firms whose offer was equal lowest with other contractors; and (d) that 6 contracts be re-advertised and awarded and the outcome reported to the Committee in due course.

16. Parents as Partners

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed response to the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department's consultation paper on the future role of parents in school education.

The consultation paper was issued at the end of January 1998 to all school boards, Head Teachers, Education Authorities and a wide range of other interested organisations. The paper seeks views on all aspects of parental involvement and develops the debate on how partnership with parents can be made effective. It focuses on the role and development of school boards, home-school agreements and responding to parents.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed consultation response as set out in the

report.

17. Consultation on Work Experience in Scotland

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposed response to a Scottish Office Education and Industry Department consultation on work experience.

The ten secondary schools and two special schools who have secondary age pupils within North Ayrshire participate in a work experience programme aimed largely at pupils in S4. Although the promotion of work experience was enhanced in the 1980s a number of changes have taken place eg the conclusion of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, local government reorganisation, the devolved management of resources to schools and the increase in Health and Safety Legislation. Given these factors the Scottish Office now wishes to review the effectiveness and value of work experience and is seeking views in a number of specific areas.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed consultation response as set out in the report.

18. Nursery Education: West Kilbride Primary School

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the outcome of consultation on a proposal to develop a Local Authority nursery class in accommodation at West Kilbride Primary School which is currently occupied by Nurserytime private nursery.

Details on the consultation process were provided including information on the 21 responses received. Although there was overall a great deal of support for the proposal, some concerns were expressed and these issues have been clarified and where necessary addressed. An assurance was also given that the Council acknowledges the role which Nurserytime plays in offering provision for children in their anti pre-school year and will continue to work in partnership with them and with West Kilbride playgroup to ensure that every child in their pre-school year in West Kilbride has access to a funded nursery place.

The Committee agreed (a) that arrangements be made to set up a local authority nursery class within West Kilbride Primary School; (b) that parents be invited to register their children for the nursery class in the week beginning Monday 11 May 1998; and (c) that efforts to assist Nurserytime in identifying new premises within West Kilbride be continued.

19. Award of School Transport Contracts

Submitted report by the Director of Education confirming the tenders received in respect of school transport contracts which provide for the renewal of the existing arrangements and proposing that these be awarded in line with the recommendations of Strathclyde Passenger Transport.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals for awarding these contracts.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.