

Educational Services Committee  
23 May 2006

**IRVINE, 23 May 2006** - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 pm.

**Present**

Peter McNamara, Jacqueline Browne, Donald Reid, Tom Barr, Drew Duncan, Jane Gorman, Jean Highgate, Alan Hill, Margaret McDougall, Father Matthew McManus, Elisabeth Marshall, Rev Sandy Montgomerie, David Munn, David O'Neill, John Reid, John Scott, Elaine Shaw, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

**In Attendance**

Ian Snodgrass, Chief Executive; J. Travers, Corporate Director; B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources, J. Leckie, J. Ward and C. Kirk, Heads of Service ; G. Syme, Quality Improvement Officer; J. Tulips, Project Team Leader and S. Storrie, Project Officer (Public Private Partnership Project)(Educational Services); and G. Lawson, Head of Corporate and Democratic Support and J. Bannatyne, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

**Chair**

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Gordon Allison and Gordon Smith.

**1. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 4 April 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Educational Services Standing Sub Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix ES1) being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Educational Services Standing Sub Committee held on 5 May 2006.

The Committee agreed to approve the Minutes.

**3. ICT in Primary School**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress in the development of ICT to support the curriculum in primary schools.

During 2004/05 broadband was introduced in North Ayrshire primary schools and this has enhanced the learning skills of pupils through access to the internet and the use of e-mail. Staff development has also led to increased use of the internet, multi media projectors, digital cameras, digital video and interactive whiteboards. The impact of ICT on teaching and learning is evident through the quality of display and presentations, the uptake of in-service courses, requests for advice on the purchase of hardware and software, records of internet usage and the number of applications to participate in pilot programmes.

The pilot ICT Mentor Programme, originally set up with New Opportunities funding to build up a pool of primary teaching staff skilled in ICT, has proved successful and has been extended from nine teachers to 27.

The report also provided information on progress in relation to a number of other projects. Further developments include the introduction of individual primary school websites and increased use of digital audio hardware and software to promote learning and research.

Noted.

#### **4. Sport and Physical Activity in North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the support for sport and physical activity in North Ayrshire and on progress on the Strategy for Physical Activity, Sport and Health.

The Strategy for Physical Activity, Sport and Health in North Ayrshire was launched in November 2003 involving partnership working between North Ayrshire Leisure Limited (NALL), NHS Ayrshire and Arran, Sportscotland and North Ayrshire Council. The Strategy Action Plan produced recommended 55 specific actions and the implementation of these is the responsibility of three groups being the Facilities Group, the School Sport and Physical Activity Group and the Coach Volunteer and Performance Development Group. The Partnership has now decided to review progress to date.

The Facilities working group had a role in the PPP consultation process and details of relevant key developments during the first two years of this Strategy were provided in the report.

The School Sport and Physical Activity working group focused on the implementation of the Active Schools Programme and a number of examples of the effectiveness of this programme were listed. The Coach, Volunteer and Performance Development (C.V.P.D.) working group reported good progress in a number of areas.

The Committee requested clarification on various aspects of the Strategy which included the extent of public access to sporting facilities, the current lack of funding provision to reward individual excellence in sport, details of those specific areas to which the £4/5 million of funding has already been allocated and whether the £7 million of funding allocated will be sufficient to fulfil all the objectives of the Strategy.

The Committee agreed to refer the report to the Standing Sub Committee for further consideration.

## **5. Sportscotland Support for the Regeneration Areas of North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on new funding from Sportscotland to support sports participation in the Regeneration Areas of North Ayrshire.

Sportscotland has developed a successor Lottery programme to the former Social Inclusion Partnerships programme which has ended. The new programme entitled "Community Regeneration Through Sport" has been allocated funding of £102,000 over three years. This is targeted at regeneration areas within North Ayrshire with the aim of building capacity at local level to support long term increases in sport participation.

The funding will enable a Club Development Officer to be employed over the three year period to provide professional support to clubs serving regeneration areas in North Ayrshire. An additional £60,000 over three years has also been provided by Sportscotland to support the work of the Club Development Officer. The Officer will work with a manageable number of identified sports clubs in regeneration areas and will assist them with the production of a Club Development Plan to build community capacity. The Plan will cover management and coaching structures, the creation of a balanced number of participants, in terms of age, gender, ability etc., school/club links, and community involvement/opportunities.

The selection of the individual clubs will be based on the 'Fit for Purpose Criteria' identified by the Strategy for Physical Activity Sport and Health Partnership Groups.

These include servicing regeneration areas, multi sport/club/team focus, providing opportunities for males and females, having a management structure in place with established school links, evidence of community involvement and vision and a desire to grow. Sportscotland has set some specific targets for achievement through the new programme and these were outlined in the report.

Noted.

## **6. Public Private Partnership for Schools Project: Progress Report**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the finalisation of the contract negotiations for the PPP for Schools Project outlining the next stages of the project's development.

After a full evaluation of the bids received, First Class Consortium was appointed as the preferred bidder for the PPP Project. All necessary approvals from the Scottish Executive together with the formal planning permissions required have been secured. Funding of loose furniture and equipment for the new schools has been transferred into the capital programme out of PPP funding.

Full agreement in all outstanding issues was reached with First Class Consortium on 15 March 2006 and a fully binding legal contract has been signed. The consortium has set up a new company called PPP Services (North Ayrshire) Ltd. The building sub-contractors are Barr Ltd (Arran and St Matthew's Academies) and Dawn Construction Ltd (Greenwood Academy and Stanley Primary School). The facility management sub-contractor is MITIE plc.

The contract negotiations have been successful in delivering all of the Council's requirements for the new school buildings within the affordable budget parameters established since 2003. Negotiations have been protracted however and this has resulted in a review of the construction timetable. Arran High School and Stanley Primary School are on course for occupation in August 2007 but Greenwood and St. Matthew's Academies are not now contracted for occupation until October 2007.

North Ayrshire is the first of all nine Councils allocated PPP funding in 2003 to reach agreement and this accelerated procurement represents a significant financial gain to the Council. The PPP Project has met the stringent timetable discipline laid down by the Project Board.

The level of affordability gap finally achieved was £0.976 million, approximately £75,000 lower than the £1.051 million ceiling, and £224,000 lower than the original gap of £1.2 million set in 2003. This represents an estimated saving to the Council of £2.87 million over the 30 year contract.

A total of 4,000 newsletters have been issued to all staff and parents illustrating each of the new school designs and a community newsletter has been prepared by the developer for distribution in the Laighdykes area, Saltcoats.

Noted.

## **7. Provision of Nursery Places for Two Year Old Children**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on an invitation from the Scottish Executive to participate in a two year pilot project to provide nursery places for two year old children.

The Scottish Executive is currently considering proposals submitted by Glasgow, Dundee and North Ayrshire Councils for the opportunity to participate in a two year pilot project to provide nursery places for two year old children. The Council, if successful will receive £250k of funding each year for the pilot project which will be subject to external evaluation.

Following approval of the Council's Nursery Admissions Policy in 2003, six local multi-agency Admission Panels were established. These Panels meet regularly to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families have access to a limited number of nursery places for children up to and including 0-3 years of age. The Admissions Policy will be used throughout the period of the pilot to allocate places.

The report gave details of the current provision for children under the age of three within North Ayrshire by four existing local authority nurseries, Sure start and 11 partner groups which provide nursery education.

The substance of the proposals submitted to the Scottish Executive are:-

- (a) To create 50-60 places in three primary schools with nursery classes, one in Kilwinning, one in Irvine and one on the Isle of Cumbrae. It is intended that there will be 10 -15 places per session in each of the schools, the location of which will be determined by space and requirements for adaptation.
- (b) To create 30 additional places at Garnock Early Years Centre, Kilbirnie and Springvale Nursery Centre, Saltcoats
- (c) To commission approximately 10–20 places in private/voluntary groups currently in partnership with the Council; and
- (d) To create 10 places in Arran.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals for the Council's participation in the two year pilot scheme subject to the Council's submission being accepted by the Scottish Executive.

## **8. Irvine Library Relocation**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the range of services planned for the new Irvine library community facility and on progress to date.

The new library will be sited in Irvine High Street using the former Global Video site. In addition to the facilities available at present, the new library will provide a dedicated children's library, a homework club, a dedicated area for young adults, a dedicated IT suite, listening ports for CDs, multimedia on screen news and information systems, computer facilities and a self service terminal for book issue.

Noted.

## **9. Modern Languages in Schools**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on current developments in the teaching of modern languages in North Ayrshire schools.

Increasing numbers of students in North Ayrshire are choosing to study languages and are achieving higher levels of performance. All primary schools deliver two years of French in P6 and P7 and in March 2006 25 new teachers of Primary French successfully completed relevant training courses. A number of primary schools, through a number of approaches, have extended their languages programmes to include the study of Spanish. A Spanish exchange teacher has been working with pupils in Glebe and St Luke's Primary Schools assisting with Modern Languages in the Primary School (MLPS) training for teachers. Language developments at secondary level have been enhanced through links with schools in Spain and it is proposed to develop similar links with primary schools. There have also been developments in the study of non-European languages such as Mandarin Chinese and Japanese.

Secondary pupil uptake of languages in recent years has been boosted by participation in the inter-authority Partners in Excellence project with East Ayrshire and Argyll & Bute Councils. The project involves the use of new technology for podcasts, verb casts, animation and film-making weekends in addition to immersion visits and summer schools for pupils in France, Germany and Spain. Since the Partners in Excellence programme is being phased out over the next two years discussions are being undertaken with national bodies in Scotland to try to maintain some of the benefits of the project. In addition, a submission is being prepared with partner countries to seek European funding through a Comenius Project.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the linking of primary schools in North Ayrshire with primary schools in Spain; and (b) the development of funding submissions to maintain the work of the Partners in Excellence Project.

## **10. Unauthorised Absence: Automated Call Systems**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the pilot initiative to improve attendance in secondary schools by means of an automated call system for contacting parents of children who have an unexplained absence.

In May 2005 the Committee agreed to the implementation of a pilot initiative in four secondary schools involving sending multiple text messages, voice mails and emails to parents and carers as a means of improving communication and combating truancy.

The system was installed in five computers in each secondary school and two representatives from each school were trained in its use.

All secondary schools are now using the system and this has been welcomed by most parents, resulting in increased numbers making early contact with the school to explain their child's absence. Secondary schools have also used the system to notify parents of school trips, parents' evenings, homework assignments, etc. and this has also been well supported by parents. There is early evidence that absence levels in 2006 are lower than those for the similar period in previous years with an average of 1% reduction in overall absence in secondary schools. Pupil Welfare Officers are also reporting that contact with parents has become easier.

An announcement by the Scottish Executive in relation to the provision of future funding for the initiative is still awaited.

Noted.

## **11. Family Fun Days**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on activities for children organised by the Children's Outreach Services during the summer holiday period and on a proposed charge for certain activities.

The Play Strategy Working Group is currently in the process of finalising an action plan which will address the needs of children and improve the quality of play opportunities throughout North Ayrshire.

Family Fun Days currently organised by the Children's Outreach Services, provide a range of activities for children during the school summer holidays. They are targeted at families with children under 12 years and 2,500 children took part during the summer of 2005. Funding has been secured from Surestart to support the programme this year and it is proposed to make a small charge of £1 for consumables.

The Committee agreed to approve the arrangements for summer holiday activities for children under 12 years during 2006.

## **12. Out of School Care**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the current position in respect of Out of School Care Services across North Ayrshire and on future developments.

In 1996 seven Out of School Care providers operated within North Ayrshire, mainly in the Three Towns area. There are now 29 groups providing a range of services, eight of which are managed by the Council. Each mainland school has access to Out of School Care, both after school and during school holidays. This care is provided by Out of School Care Groups, and Breakfast Clubs managed by the Council, Out of School Care Groups managed by voluntary management committees, private nurseries and childminders. In addition a new Sitter Service known as 'Steps and Stages' is available, funded by the Scottish Executive, through the Council's Working for Families project.

The Scottish Executive document entitled 'School's Out' issued in 2003 resulted in every local authority having to carry out a mapping exercise from which an action plan was developed. Two major gaps in provision were identified as a result, namely provision for children with additional support needs and an appropriate style of childcare for children aged 10 – 16 years.

In 2004, new regulations came into force requiring all early education and childcare staff to register with the Scottish Social Services Council and to hold, or be working towards an appropriate qualification. As a result the Children's Outreach Services have invested heavily in training for the local authority, private and voluntary sectors.

Future proposals include continued investment in the support to groups provided by the Children's Outreach Services staff and ongoing monitoring to ensure the needs of children requiring additional support in a childcare setting are met. Steps will be taken to ensure staff and providers receive adequate training and support and research is to be undertaken to identify the needs of children in the 10–16 age group in an effort to meet their needs.



In addition a quality assurance package is to be developed to further enhance the quality of the service currently offered by Out of School Care Groups and gaps in provision will continue to be identified to enable appropriate services to be introduced to fill them.

Noted.

### **13. HMIE Report: Arran: Kilmory Primary School**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on Kilmory Primary School, Isle of Arran, carried out in February 2006 as part of a national sample of primary education.

The report outlined the key strengths of the school and made recommendations on the areas requiring action. These recommendations will be incorporated in the School Development Plan.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) to note the arrangements for follow through.

### **14. HMIE Report: Saltcoats: James Reid School**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on James Reid School, Saltcoats, carried out in February 2006 as part of a national sample of provision for pupils with additional support needs.

The report outlined the key strengths of the school and made recommendations on the areas requiring action. These recommendations will be incorporated in the School Development Plan.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) to note the arrangements for follow through.

### **15. HMIE Report: Ardrossan Academy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on Ardrossan Academy, carried out in January and February 2006 as part of a national sample of secondary education.

The report outlined the key strengths of the school and made recommendations on the areas requiring action. These recommendations will be incorporated in the School Development Plan.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) to note the arrangements for follow through.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.

**Educational Services Committee**  
**23/05/2006**

Appendix No  
**ES1**

Educational Services Standing Sub Committee  
5 May 2006

**IRVINE, 5 May 2006** - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 pm.

**Present**

Jacqueline Browne, Drew Duncan and John Scott.

**In Attendance**

J Ward and C Kirk, Heads of Service, G Johnstone and A MacLean, Quality Improvement Managers (Educational Services); and J Bannatyne and E Fisher, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

**Chair**

Councillor Browne in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Gordon Allison, Jean Highgate, Peter McNamara, Donald Reid, John Reid and Elaine Shaw.

**1. Follow-Through Reports**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on schools which have completed the Follow-Through process following HMIE inspections between February and April 2006.

HMIE reports contain action points for improvement and there is a well established and rigorous monitoring system in place in which the Quality Improvement Service is involved. Responsibility for publishing Follow-Through reports is shared between HMIE and local authorities. Since February 2006 Follow-Through reports have been finalised for 2 schools in North Ayrshire, namely, Greenwood Academy, Dreghorn and St Luke's Primary School, Kilwinning. Copies of the finalised individual school reports were appended to the report and provided details on the HMIE inspection, continuous improvement and the steps taken to progress towards meeting the main points for action.

The Chair undertook to write to the 2 schools to acknowledge the improvements introduced by them following the inspections and to congratulate them on their achievements.

The Sub Committee agreed to (a) commend schools for their work in meeting the points for action; and (b) otherwise note the report.

## **2. Enterprise in Education Evaluation**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational services) on an evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Enterprise in Education Action Plan.

In May 2004 the Scottish Executive approved the Council's Determined to Succeed Strategy and Action Plan. The Action Plan detailed how Enterprise in Education would be taken forward over the period 2004 to 2006 and outlined how it would be delivered in all North Ayrshire schools through:-

- Embedding Enterprise in Education in the curriculum P1 to S6;
- Involving the business community in supporting the delivery of Enterprise in Education programmes through partnership working with schools;
- Extending the range of vocational-based educational opportunities for post 14 students; and
- Communication with Stakeholders.

The report provided details of progress in the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Determined to Succeed Strategy Group has responsibility for monitoring progress in implementing the Action Plan and the annual evaluation and monitoring report has been submitted to the Scottish Executive detailing progress in Year 2.

How Good is Our School at Enterprise in Education, a set of quality indicators, was launched in March 2004. This self-evaluation guide is designed to support planning for improvement in Enterprise in Education with a framework providing advice and guidance to support classroom teachers in the use of quality indicators. Enterprise in Education is also included in the Standards and Quality Report and progress will be monitored as part of the school development planning process.

Noted.

### **3. Race Equality Policy and Action Plan**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the implementation of the Race Equality Policy and Action Plan.

At a meeting of the Educational Services Committee on 21 February 2006 it was agreed that the implementation of the Educational Services Race Equality Policy be referred to the Sub Committee for further discussion. The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act (2000) places a duty on education authorities to make provision for minority ethnic groups and to promote equal opportunities. The Scottish Executive has also adopted the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in 2000 in which the importance of proactive work combating racism and inequality is underlined. To meet the requirements of the Act, the collection of data on the achievement of pupils from minority groups is likely to be a priority.

Currently parents or carers who complete enrolment forms are asked to identify the pupil's ethnic background and the language spoken at home from a range of categories. Pupils identified as ethnic minority represent 1.9% of the total number of pupils in North Ayrshire. Details of the numbers of pupils from each ethnic group and of the attainment of pupils in 5-14 national assessments and in SQA examinations were given in appendices to the report. Indications are that the majority of children from the main ethnic minority groups are performing well against the North Ayrshire average. It will, however, be important to examine further the performance of secondary aged Chinese children, the largest single group within ethnic minorities, to ensure that adequate strategies are in place.

Attendance of pupils within the main ethnic groups compares well with the population as a whole but the attendance of travellers from all categories at primary and secondary schools remains an issue. Work has been undertaken by the Pupil Support Service to ensure that primary aged pupils are encouraged to enrol in their local school at their arrival on site and the pupil support teacher makes regular contact with parents. There are links with the site provision made by Community Learning and Development and this will be enhanced over this session. Details of attendance for all primary and secondary categories of children were also provided in an appendix to the report.

There are 157 pupils for whom English is an additional language in North Ayrshire schools. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are supported by teachers within the Pupil Support Service and additional classroom assistant time is also allocated through the annual audit, if required.

Special exam arrangements are allowed through the Scottish Qualification Authority for candidates who require them. Schools have identified a need for more effective translation services both for written information and in face to face meetings with parents and this is being done by the Equalities Officer Group.

Under the Race Equality Policy, schools must submit reports of racial harassment and bullying, containing an outline of the incident and action taken by the school. There are indications that there is a degree of under reporting and it will be important to continue to raise the awareness of staff and pupils in relation to this.

The Scottish Executive is currently piloting a range of curriculum support materials which promote race equality which will be added to current school curricular programmes.

Race Equality monitoring will be given a high priority at school and authority level in the following ways:-

- Quality Improvement Officers will review schools' self evaluation against Routes to Equality and Fairness;
- The Race Equality Action Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis; and
- Guidance to schools on the impact assessment of school policies will be issued when the authority pilot has been completed.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm.