

Educational Services Committee
8 August 2006

IRVINE, 8 August 2006 - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Peter McNamara, Jacqueline Browne, Donald Reid, Gordon Allison, Tom Barr, Gordon Clarkson, Drew Duncan, Jane Gorman, Jean Highgate, Margaret McDougall, Elizabeth Marshall, Rev. Sandy Montgomerie, David Munn, David O'Neill, John Reid, John Scott, Elaine Shaw, Gordon Smith, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

J. Travers, Corporate Director, B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources, C. Kirk, J. Ward, and J. Leckie, Heads of Service and J. McKnight, Principal Officer (Community Learning and Development), (Educational Services); H. Hunter, Principal Accountant (Finance); J. Andrew, Principal Officer and C. Templeton, Architect (Property Services); A. Wattie, Communications Officer and M. McKeown, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Father Matthew McManus and Stewart Dewar.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 23 May 2006, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Arran Outdoor Education Centre (D)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on tenders received for the construction of an Outdoor Education Centre at Clauchlands Point, Lamlash, Isle of Arran.

Tenders for the construction of the centre were invited with a return date of 1 August 2006. The lowest offer of £4,411,162.39 submitted by Barr Limited is considered to be fair and reasonable. The offer is however £105,000 over the project budget and a savings exercise will therefore be undertaken to bring the tender in line with the project budget.

The Committee agreed to accept the tender submitted by Barr Limited for £4,411,162.39, subject to a savings exercise being concluded to bring the tender in line with the project budget.

3. 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 June 2006, and on projections for the end of financial year 2006/07.

At its meeting on 7 February 2006 the Council approved the Revenue Budget for 2006/07 which included an Educational Services budget of £135,600,000. The revised annual budget now stands at £133,528,000. Explanations of the current and projected end of year budgetary variances were provided in the report. The Corporate Director will take appropriate measures to bring the budget back on target by the end of the financial year.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the budgetary position for Educational Services at the end of June 2006 and the end of year projections; (b) that future reports should include both objective and subjective analysis of the budgetary position; and (c) that the Corporate Director (Educational Services) report to a future meeting on the fees paid to list G schools.

4. Health Promotion Activity within Educational Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the range of health promotion activities being undertaken within Educational Services.

Educational Services works with key partners to contribute to improving health in North Ayrshire through a range of health promoting activities aimed at increasing the quality of life for learners, staff and the wider community. Whilst pupils and parents in schools and nurseries are a key target audience for these activities, a significant role is also played by Community Learning and Development, Libraries, Cultural Services, and other educational services. The report identified the wide range of health promotion activities currently being undertaken, and those activities planned for session 2006/07 i.e.

- development of a Health Promoting Schools Accreditation Scheme for North Ayrshire;
- appointment of a Health Promotion Coordinator within all schools;
- distribution of Health Promotion Support Packs to all schools;
- audits of health promotion activities within schools;

- moves to increase in the amount of physical activity in the curriculum within schools from 1.5 hours to 2 hours by August 2008;
- the appointment of a Public Health Nurse from Surestart funding to manage a behaviour training programme for parents of young children; and
- the registration of all North Ayrshire schools as Health Promoting Schools by 2008.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the health promotion activities currently being undertaken within Educational Services; and (b) approve the proposals for session 2006/07 and beyond, as set out in the report.

5. Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on transitional arrangements being put in place in preparation for the establishment of new Parent Councils by August 2007.

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 requires Scottish Ministers and Education Authorities to promote the involvement of parents in children's education at publicly funded schools. The Act aims to help parents become involved with their child's education and learning, become active participants in the life of schools, and express their views on school education generally. The Act requires Scottish Ministers to issue guidance to Education Authorities on their duty to prepare a Parental Involvement Strategy, on the preparation of schemes to establish Parent Councils, and on how Parent Councils can carry out their functions. The Scottish Executive is currently working on detailed guidance for publication in September 2006.

A North Ayrshire Parental Involvement Strategy Group, consisting of Senior Management representatives from Primary, Special, and Secondary Schools, Community Learning and Development, Library and Information Services, and the Equality Improvement Service, will be established to develop a draft Parental Involvement Strategy. The Group will also provide guidance to schools and parents on the establishment of Parent Councils, and develop a draft constitution for consultation with Parent Councils. Existing School Board and Parent Teacher Association Members, as well as the wider parent body, pupils and staff, will be consulted on, and kept informed of, developments as the transitional year progresses.

The Committee agreed to (a) approve the arrangements in place for the transitional year; and (b) receive a further progress report at a future meeting.

6. Harbour Arts Centre

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the completion of the refurbishment of the Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine.

In September 2004, the Committee was advised of a successful application to the Scottish Arts Council for funding for the redevelopment of the Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine. The project is now nearing completion and the refurbished Centre will comprise 2 state of the art studio spaces, a fully equipped theatre with dressing rooms, a much improved gallery/exhibition space, a modern foyer/reception, and a new bar (*Hacbar*). A launch programme is planned to mark the completion of the works, and a formal opening of the Centre will be undertaken by the Provost later in the year.

The Committee agreed to approve the plans to launch the redeveloped Harbour Arts Centre and to hold a formal opening by the Provost later in 2006.

7. Young Scot Smartened Card

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress by Dialogue Youth Initiative in implementing the North Ayrshire Young Scot Card.

The development of a localised Young Scot card is one of the key milestones of the Dialogue Youth Initiative. The North Ayrshire Young Scot Card is a smartened card that is free to all young people who are resident in North Ayrshire and gives cardholders access to information and advice services, national and local discounts, library services, school meals and leisure discounts. The card is also a nationally recognised proof of age card.

Young people aged 16 to 26 can apply for a card through a partnership agreement with Trading Standards. To date, 8,731 cards have been distributed to young people across North Ayrshire. A replacement card system is available through all secondary schools and also on-line via the Young Scot website. Every card application requests that the applicant agree to receive information on future services, or is consulted on services currently available to young people. A substantial database has been developed enabling the Young Scot Team and partners to maintain contact with cardholders and involve them in relevant consultations adopting the best practice social marketing model. Registered cardholders can be contacted by SMS texting or e-mail using technology developed specifically for Young Scot, which reinforces the Modernising Government approach to the project.

The development of the young persons National Entitlement Card continues to be a priority objective for the Scottish Executive with the new card to be introduced in January 2007. The Young Scot Team have a commitment to continue to work with I.T. Services to ensure the smooth transition for young people and services to the new scheme.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the progress in taking forward the North Ayrshire Dialogue Youth Initiative; and (b) support the development of the young persons National Entitlement Card, as set out in the report.

8. Music Developments 2006/07

Submitted report by the corporate Director (Educational Services) on the implementation of the Youth Music Initiative In North Ayrshire, and on the proposed music programme for 2006/07.

The Youth Music Initiative in North Ayrshire has achieved the target set by the Scottish Executive of one year's free music tuition for all pupils by P6, and has been able to move on to further enhancements of music provision in schools. The report provided details of music developments and the range of music events undertaken in North Ayrshire in 2005/06. A proposed programme of music events for 2006/07 was appended to the report.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the progress of music developments in 2005/06; and (b) approve the programme of music events for 2006/07.

9. Adult Learner Week Awards 2006

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership's Adult Learner Week Awards 2006.

The Adult Learner Week Awards recognise groups and individuals who have overcome challenges to achieve significant group or personal development through learning. The 2006 Awards Ceremony was held in Edinburgh in May 2006. The Community Learning and Development Section nominated 3 North Ayrshire groups for awards and each was successful. The Focus Creative Writing Group was awarded the Scottish Arts Council Award, the Saltcoats Young Mums Group was awarded the Scottish Television Group Award and 3TFM Community Radio for Health was awarded the Office of Communications (Ofcom) Award. This marks the first time in the 15 year history of the awards that a single local authority area has been successful in winning 3 awards.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the success of the Focus Creative Writing Group, the Saltcoats Young Mums Group, and 3TFM Community Radio for Health, and acknowledge the role played by Community Learning and Development in their success; and (b) that the Provost host a reception to mark the Groups' achievements.

10. Bookstart Initiative 2006/07

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a report from Bookstart Scotland regarding Bookstart and the impact of the initiative locally within North Ayrshire.

The Bookstart Initiative aims to encourage parents to share books and read with their children from a very early age. It offers Bookstart bags for every child containing both books and relevant advice for parents on sharing books with their children. Each bag also contains a library membership form to encourage parents to enrol children in their local library.

A report recently received from Bookstart Scotland confirmed the importance of a properly funded programme and found Bookstart North Ayrshire to be one of the best performing Bookstart programmes in Scotland. The report commended the range of events held throughout North Ayrshire and recognised the work and commitment of Bookstart staff, library staff, early years staff, and health visitors, to the programme.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the report from Bookstart Scotland and the positive impact the initiative is having locally; and (b) confirm the decision of the Surestart Sub Group of the Childcare Partnership to continue to fund the project until March 2008.

11. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award - General Council 2006

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the biennial General Council meeting of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, to be held in Edinburgh in November 2006,

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary year, encourages the development of core skills in young people and recognises their achievements in the community. North Ayrshire Council is committed to the continuing development of opportunities to raise achievement for young people. Participation in the General Council event will assist in further developing the award across North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed to nominate the Chair to attend the event.

12. Grants for Gaelic Education

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Scottish Executive response to proposals for Gaelic Language Developments in North Ayrshire.

The Committee has previously approved the submission of a bid to the Scottish Executive for funding in respect of a proposal to establish a Gaelic Medium Primary and Nursery Unit at Annick Primary School. The Scottish Executive, whilst commending the proposal, has now confirmed that funding will not be available to establish the Unit in 2006/07, due to the overall availability of funding at a national level. The Executive has, however, agreed to fund other Gaelic developments, including the Gaelic Development Project, the Peripatetic Nursery Assistant on Arran, and the Gaelic Primary Arts Project.

The Scottish Executive invited bids for projects to be funded in 2007/08 by 31 July 2006. A bid was submitted on behalf of the Council for funding in respect of the 3 current projects, as well as the Gaelic Medium Primary and Nursery Unit. If successful, the Unit will begin enrolling nursery pupils at Easter 2007.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the funding available for the Gaelic developments in 2006/07; and (b) approve the submission of the bid in respect of 2007/08, as set out in the report.

14. HMIE Report: Community Learning and Development

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the report by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIe) in respect of the inspection of the Council's Community Learning and Development Section carried out in October 2005.

The inspection was carried out against the backdrop of the new "How Good is Our Learning and Development Framework for Self Evaluation and Quality Improvement". Key aspects of the work of Community Learning and Development were inspected, including:-

- the impact of the service's engagement with young people,
- the role, contribution and impact of the service in improving the capacity of local communities,
- how effectively the service assessed needs and targeted excluded individuals and groups,
- the contribution of the service to partnerships and the effectiveness of partnerships in improving outcomes for learners and communities,
- how well staff and volunteers were supported in their work and the quality of training and development programmes; and
- the effectiveness of the service's self-evaluation and its capacity for continuous improvement.

The HMIE report on the inspection was published on 1 August 2006. This report identified a number of key strengths of Community Learning and Development and rated the way in which the Service meets the needs of young people as "excellent", the highest category possible. The recommendations arising from the inspection report will be addressed through the Community Learning and Development Service Plan. The HM District Inspector and the Community Learning and Development Link Inspector will continue to monitor progress.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the recommendations arising from the inspection report.

15. HMIE & Care Commission Inspections

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcomes of integrated inspection of services providing Pre-5 Care and Education.

In January 2005, the Committee approved a procedure for responding to the new arrangements for the inspections of services providing pre-five care and education, and agreed to receive reports on 'integrated inspections' carried out jointly by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission. Integrated Inspection reports have been published in respect of the following local authority pre-five provision and private and voluntary centres which are run in partnership with the authority:

- Brisbane Primary Nursery Class - Largs
- Kilmory Primary Nursery Class - Arran
- West Kilbride Village Nursery - West Kilbride
- Summerlea House Nursery - Largs
- Bambi Nursery - Largs
- Largs Pre-School Group - Largs
- Shiskine playgroup - Arran
- Rainbow Pre-School - Kilwinning
- Little Deers Nursery - Kilwinning

The inspection reports in respect of each of these groups were summarised in the appendices to the report.

The Committee agreed to (a) note the content of the inspection reports and the actions arising, as summarised in the appendices to the report; and (b) continue to receive similar collated reports of integrated inspections of pre-five provision on a regular basis.

The Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.