

Educational Services Committee
25 September 2002

Irvine, 25 September 2002 - At a Meeting of the Educational Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Peter McNamara, Thomas Barr, John Bell, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Father Matthew McManus, Tracey McPherson, Rev. Sandy Montgomerie, David Munn, David O'Neill, Gordon Smith and Christine Welch.

In Attendance

B. Devine, Chief Executive, J. Travers, Corporate Director (Educational Services), B. Gardner, J. Tulips, J. Ward, L. Owens, Heads of Service and G. Syme, Adviser (Educational Services), P. Doak, Senior Accountant (Financial Services), A. Wattie, Communications Officer (Communications), M. Adams and J. Bannatyne, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Councillor McNamara in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Jacqueline Browne, John Reid, Gordon Clarkson, John Sillars, Samuel Taylor, Richard Wilkinson.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 August 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. New Opportunities for Physical Education and Sport

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Council's submission for New Opportunities Funding, detailing a range of projects to be initiated to improve PE and sporting provision throughout North Ayrshire.

In addition to the original New Opportunities Fund allocation of £1.51 million to improve sporting facilities and £1.137 million to develop sporting programmes for young people aged 5 - 16, a further £44,306 has been allocated to the Council to increase the impact on youth crime. Extensive consultation has now been undertaken with schools, sports clubs and national governing bodies and discussions have been held with a number of relevant agencies and organisations. The Genesis Consultancy has also been working with the Council on the development of a Strategy for Physical Activity, Sport and Health. The criteria adopted for the submission of projects requires that an emphasis be placed on areas of relatively poor school sporting facilities and social deprivation and on the creation of school and community links to promote continuity of sporting involvement.

The outline proposals for the facilities and activities programmes, which were detailed in an appendix to the report, were submitted to the New Opportunities Fund by 20 September 2002 to meet the required submission date. These will be scrutinised and assessed over the next 6 months and it is anticipated that confirmation of funding will be given by the end of March 2003.

Noted.

3. Gaelic Lifelong Learning Provision in North Ayrshire

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress made to date in the delivery of Gaelic Language provision in North Ayrshire.

Two part-time Gaelic Development Workers based in Largs and Arran have been employed by the Council and are working closely with Children's Services in the pre-school sector. Consequently the delivery of a range of gaelic learning opportunities for pre-school primary and secondary school pupils is progressing. Gaelic has been introduced as part of the curriculum in several primary schools in Largs and Cumbrae and also in Arran High School.

A demand for Gaelic learning opportunities has been identified through consultation with local communities and accordingly it is proposed to develop a Community Learning Plan for Gaelic to meet the needs of these communities. A North Ayrshire Gaelic Forum exists as a partnership between North Ayrshire Council and all local groups, classes and organisations involved in the promotion of the gaelic language and culture. Although a reduced grant of £20,330 was awarded for 2002/03 which enabled the continued employment of the 2 Development Workers, little funding remains to meet other associated costs. Consequently an increased bid has been submitted to the Scottish Executive for funding to support the continuation of the project for a further year in 2003/04.

Noted.

4. Exclusion Levels in North Ayrshire Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the levels of temporary exclusions from North Ayrshire schools and proposals for the introduction of a new three year exclusion action plan.

The Scottish Executive, through its Social Justice Milestones, has challenged local authorities to reduce school exclusion levels by one third. New national priorities require local authorities to set targets for the number of days lost through exclusion in both primary and secondary schools.

Comparisons between the North Ayrshire and the national levels of exclusions indicate that there has been a progressive and continuous downward trend in the use of exclusion in North Ayrshire schools. The national target of a one third reduction in exclusion levels in North Ayrshire has been achieved as a result of

schools reviewing their own procedures and practices, together with support through a series of initiatives.

These include the adoption of a coherent and monitored schools exclusion policy, the negotiation of individualised secondary school targets, the creation of education support bases in every secondary school, appropriate training initiatives, close multi-agency liaison and the provision of funding through the Discipline Task Group.

Future proposals, designed to sustain the significant achievements of the past over the next 3 years, include schools continuing to review their approach to exclusion, bi-annual monitoring of exclusion statistics, the setting of targets for the secondary sector and seeking investment opportunities to enable adequate support provision to be made for specialist staff, training and new resources. Primary school exclusion targets will remain at the same level.

Clarification was requested on the possible effects on the exclusion statistics of the transfer of pupils between neighbouring denominational and non-denominational schools within the same catchment areas, at the request of parents before exclusion takes place.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the implementation of the new 3 Year Exclusion Action Plan as indicated in the report; and (b) that the Corporate Director (Educational Services) investigate the matter raised in relation to the transfer of pupils between denominational and non-denominational schools within the same catchment areas and report.

5. Discipline Task Group: Additional Funding for Schools

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on additional funding provided by the Scottish Executive to support the recommendations of the Discipline Task Group and the proposed allocation of this resource to schools.

The Scottish Executive has recently confirmed its intention to make a further £10 million available to education authorities during this financial year to ensure the continued implementation of the recommendations made in the national Discipline Task Group Report. During the financial year 2001/02 the Council received £367,328 for the provision of pupil support bases and a review of school and local authority policies on discipline and ethos. The Council's share of the additional resources for these purposes is £282,560, which is to be spent by the end of this financial year.

The Scottish Executive has recommended that the additional financial resource be used to support two particular recommendations from the Discipline Task Group Report relating (1) to the provision of additional auxiliary support to assist with the care and welfare of children and young people in school, and (2) to the provision of home-school links workers in secondary schools and primary clusters, with a view to assisting in building a partnership between schools, families and services providing family support.

The Council will use the additional resources for these purposes and a detailed breakdown of the allocation of classroom assistant hours to primary and secondary schools, based on the school roll, was given in an appendix to the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the deployment of the additional resources as indicated in the report.

6. Education for Citizenship

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the publication of National Guidelines on Education for Citizenship by Learning and Teaching Scotland, which will require to be incorporated into the school planning process throughout North Ayrshire.

The guidelines define citizenship, and explain its importance and relevance to education while clarifying what it involves in practice. They are designed to improve young people's knowledge and understanding, to develop a range of skills and competencies, and to assist in the organisation of skills relating to creativity and enterprise. A separate set of North Ayrshire Council guidelines have been produced, based on the national guidelines. School planning will remain the main process for taking forward initiatives in relation to Education for Citizenship and full details of the North Ayrshire guidelines were given in an appendix to the report.

Noted.

7. Carolling Christmas 2002

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a major music initiative involving the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and North Ayrshire Primary Schools.

Six North Ayrshire primary schools will be selected to receive visits from an amateur and 12 musicians from the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Pupils from the schools selected will create 6 new Christmas carols to be performed at a Christmas event to be held in the Magnum in December 2002. A further 16 - 18 schools will be sent a CD of carols and Christmas songs and will also participate in the Christmas event with the RSNO. Primary school teachers will be involved at every stage of the preparations for the event. The event will be funded from existing budgets and external sponsorship.

Noted.

8. Junior Engineers for Britain 2002 Challenge

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the success of pupils at Pirnmill Primary School in the Junior Engineers for Britain 2002 Challenge Finals held in Stirling University.

Young Engineers for Britain is an annual competition organised by the Engineering Council which is designed to strengthen links between education and industry by encouraging young people to undertake project engineering work.

As a result of their success in the Scottish Finals of the Junior Engineers for Britain 2002 Challenge, the pupils from Pirnmill Primary school qualified to take part in the national final of the Young Engineers for Britain competition held in London.

Noted.

9. HMIE Report: Hayocks Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on Hayocks Primary School, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the HMIE Report.

10. HMIE Report: St Peter's Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the HMIE Report on St. Peter's Primary School, Ardrossan.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the key points for action in the HMIE Report.

11. HMIE Reports on Primary Schools 1998/2002

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the outcome of inspections of North Ayrshire Primary Schools by HMIE during the period April 1998 and June 2002.

Noted.

12. Revenue Budget 2002/03: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Educational Services at the end of August 2002 and projections for the financial year 2002/03.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.

