
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

3 October 2023

Cabinet

Title: Ayrshire College and Irvine Royal Academy Skills Centre of Excellence

Purpose: To update Cabinet on the revised position in relation to the Ayrshire College Skills Centre of Excellence at Irvine Royal Academy.

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the revised position in relation to the Ayrshire College Skills Centre of Excellence at Irvine Royal Academy; and
 - b) Welcomes the School-College Partnership developments and the Future Skills Hub approach.
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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In 2014 Cabinet approved a proposal to develop facilities within Irvine Royal Academy to co-locate a Skills Centre of Excellence supported by Ayrshire College and North Ayrshire Council.
- 1.2 A recent review has resulted in a revised approach to delivery of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW activity), with a focus on the Future Skills Hub at Kilwinning Campus.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2014 Cabinet agreed a proposal to develop facilities within Irvine Royal Academy to co-locate a Skills Centre of Excellence supported by Ayrshire College and North Ayrshire Council. This would provide an opportunity to offer the delivery of a range of vocational programmes up to and including SCQF level 6 skills in the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.
- 2.2 Ayrshire College has three campuses in North Ayrshire. The main campus in Kilwinning offers a range of further and higher education courses in a number of subject areas and the Cabinet report included a proposal to deliver sports provision from Irvine Royal Academy from August 2014.
- 2.3 In 2012-13 Irvine Royal Academy had a school roll of 561, considerably short of the school's capacity.

- 2.4 The proposal was intended to deliver many of the recommendations from the then interim report from the Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, which Ayrshire College and its partners welcomed. In particular, considerable drivers in the College's work with partners have been focusing efforts on employment outcomes and supporting local economic development, underpinned by partnerships with industry.
- 2.5 The Irvine Royal Skills Centre of Excellence offered 15 to 18 year olds (as well as young people aged 19-24 and adult returners) the chance to access high quality, vocational courses relevant to industry needs in an innovative learning environment providing access to high quality skills training.
- 2.6 Analysis by the Ayrshire Economic Partnership and North Ayrshire's Community Planning Partnership identified a number of sectors with potential for jobs growth. These sectors included construction and hospitality and tourism. It was proposed that the Skills Centre of Excellence would specialise in courses which would support the industry sectors of construction, hospitality and tourism, and sport and leisure.
- 2.7 This investment included co-locating the College within Irvine Royal Academy, upgrading the existing estate to accommodate the Skills Centre of Excellence and installing state of the art equipment to deliver industry relevant courses.
- 2.8 The proposal relocated current school activity from a wing of the school to allow the College to occupy a distinct space, sharing sports facilities with the school.
- 2.9 The development had the following phases:
- Phase 1 – September 2014 – Sport/Fitness (including separate changing accommodation); Health and Social Care (brought forward from Phase 2); and, if possible, catering for students; and
 - Phase 2 – Hospitality, Construction and Engineering by August 2015.
- 2.10 The costs of the development were met by Ayrshire College, through access to funding from the Wood Commission implementation fund, the Scottish Funding Council and Skills Development Scotland; and by North Ayrshire Council.
- 2.11 The College leased the relevant accommodation from the Council. It was agreed that:
- The lease would be for a period of not less than 10 years from the date of entry for Phase 1;
 - No rent would be payable for the duration of the lease;
 - Ayrshire College would require to pay directly, or where appropriate reimburse the Council all utility charges and statutory charges directly attributable to their occupation; and
 - Ayrshire College would reimburse the Council the due and equitable proportion of common repairs, maintenance, management and insurance costs attributable to their occupation, thus helping to defray sunk costs currently absorbed by the Council due to under occupation of the school estate at Irvine Royal Academy.

- 2.12 Joint partnership working has ensured that students have gained qualifications in areas such as engineering, carpentry and joinery and hospitality. Students have progressed to further study at College or directly in to employment.
- 2.13 North Ayrshire-Wide School – College Partnership

The current School-College partnership is a valuable part of the curriculum. The offer provides high quality senior phase vocational courses from Level 4 and above. They are intended to support young people prepare for employment and plan progression pathways onto full-time courses and university. It also builds a network of support for young people as they move between school and college and university.

Our School-College Partnership team meet regularly to discuss the attendance and progress of each pupil to help support young people towards being successful on their college course. All the partnership work which happens between Education and the college is a contribution to the Developing the Young Workforce commitments. Examples of courses offered as part of the partnership are listed below:

Skills for Work (SfW)

Skills for Work courses focus on generic employability skills needed for success in the workplace. The courses offer learners opportunities to learn these skills through a variety of practical experiences that are linked to vocational areas.

National Progression Award (NPA)

NPAs are aimed at developing learners' knowledge and understanding and, where appropriate, practical experience of a given area of vocational education.

National Certificate (NC)

A National Certificate (NC) is sometimes suitable for students with no formal qualifications. They offer practical help in developing skills for work and can, in some instances, provide access to higher level programmes such as a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND).

Foundation Apprenticeship (FA)

Foundation Apprenticeships are a work-based learning opportunity for senior-phase secondary school pupils. Lasting two years, pupils typically begin their Foundation Apprenticeship in S5. Young people spend time out of school at college or with a local employer, and complete the Foundation Apprenticeship alongside their other subjects like National 5s and Highers.

HNC (Higher National Certificate)

HNC courses provide the practical skills and the theoretical knowledge employer will expect you to have to perform a specific job. All the courses are made up of Higher National Units and usually take one year to complete.

In addition to the courses as listed above, ongoing outreach work to strengthen the partnership continues. For example, Innovation Bursts are offered to pupils in S2 and S3 to offer samples of vocational courses aligned to Ayrshire Growth Deal priorities.

2.14 Review of Skills Centre of Excellence

In 2022, Ayrshire College, with North Ayrshire Council, initiated a review of the Skills Centre of Excellence approach.

What has changed since 2014?

- The recent development of the **Regional Skills Strategy**, especially the goal of *ensuring that pathways into regional employment opportunities are clearly defined, and support both new entrants and job changers in the labour market.*
- In recognition of the understanding of emerging skills requirements in preparation for Ayrshire Growth Deal opportunities and STEM developments locally and nationally, **North Ayrshire Council agreed to contribute £200k to the development of a Future Skills Hub at Kilwinning College** campus from the 2018/19 Council capital programme. This was in addition to the transfer of land for a nominal £1 during 2021 to support the development of the Hub.
- The Future Skills Hub is an exciting campus development project for the College situated on the site of the North Ayrshire Kilwinning Campus. The new Hub replaces the College's existing workshop facilities at Nethermains and will enable the College to offer a dynamic and flexible curriculum aligned to the needs of local and national skills priorities. The low carbon two-storey building will provide a **flexible learning space that can respond to emerging technologies** as the College and partners upskill the workforce of the future in Engineering, Construction and SMART Technologies.
- Ongoing development of the **NAC/Ayrshire College Partnership** and the Irvine Royal Academy curriculum since 2014, including a greater range of DYW vocational opportunities.
- Enhanced partnership between **Ayrshire College and KA Leisure** leading to increased College use of the Portal and other sports facilities to deliver, support and volunteer within accredited qualifications;

- Substantial evidence of **disinclination on the part of young people to continue their education within a school campus environment** rather than transitioning to a Further Education setting. As a result of relocating the courses formerly delivered at the Irvine Royal Academy campus, no young people will be disadvantaged, and it is anticipated that the uptake in some courses will increase due to the relocation of the learning and teaching to a FE facility.
- An **increase in the pupil roll at Irvine Royal Academy** from 561 to 762 provides an opportunity to reconsider the use of the “College” wing, with the potential to create a health and wellbeing hub in the school campus.

2.15 As a result of these changes and opportunities, Ayrshire College and North Ayrshire Council have agreed a discontinuation of the current Skills Centre of Excellence model at Irvine Royal Academy to facilitate the development of the new Future Skills Hub and to respond to evidenced student expectations that their post-school learning takes place in a different setting.

2.16 North Ayrshire Council’s Estates and Education departments have worked collaboratively with the College to agree a mutually acceptable early exit strategy from Irvine Royal Academy.

2.17 A review is currently underway in relation to the newly vacated space at Irvine Royal Academy, taking into consideration the increase in the school roll, changing requirements of the vocational and health and wellbeing curriculum and the needs of other services.

2.18 The College and the Council continue to work together to provide the best possible opportunities for young people in North Ayrshire, through the Local Employability Partnership, Modern Apprenticeships, Employer Engagement, the Ayrshire Skills Group, the Ayrshire Growth Deal – Ayrshire Skills Investment Fund, Inward Investment, Engineering Skills, Employability and Resilience Support through the Hive, 24/7 Pez and Pez Plus classes as well as for adult learners through Community Based Adult Learning, including New Scots; Multiply through the Shared Prosperity Fund and the North Ayrshire Council and Ayrshire College Early Learning and Childcare Collaborative Working Group.

3. Proposals

3.1 That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the revised position in relation to the Ayrshire College Skills Centre of Excellence at Irvine Royal Academy
- b) Welcomes the School-College Partnership developments and the Future Skills Hub approach.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 The Council's Estates department has concluded a mutually satisfactory early exit agreement with Ayrshire College. North Ayrshire Council will assume running costs for the whole campus.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 The Council's Estates department has concluded a mutually satisfactory early exit agreement with Ayrshire College.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 The School/College Partnership and DYW has a strategic focus on opportunities for all young people.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 The new College facility will be supported by green technologies using air source heat pumps for the building's heating systems.

Key Priorities

4.6 The following key priorities are relevant to the proposal:

- Active and strong communities
- Children and young people experience the best start in life
- Inclusive, growing and enterprising local economy
- Residents and communities enjoy life-long health and well-being.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 The education and skills agenda provides the basis for the progression of all pillars of Community Wealth Building.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation has taken place with young people who are or intend to be students, Ayrshire College, North Ayrshire Education Service, Irvine Royal Academy, North Ayrshire Council Estates and Legal departments and Cabinet members.

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For further information please contact **Audrey Sutton, Executive Director (Communities & Education)**, on **(01294) 324414**.

Background Papers

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