

Education Executive
6 December 2011

IRVINE, 6 December 2011 - At a Meeting of the Education Executive of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

John Bell, Tom Barr, Alex Gallagher, Gordon McConnell, Peter McNamara, David O'Neill and Gordon Smith.

In Attendance

C. Kirk (Corporate Director), M. Armstrong, M. Docherty and J. Leckie, Heads of Service and A. Sutton, Manager, Information and Culture, (Education and Skills); C. McCourt, Finance Manager (Finance and Infrastructure); J. Montgomery, General Manager, C. Rowney, Communications Officer and P. Shiach, Committee Services Officer (Chief Executive's Service).

Also In Attendance

C. McGuire, Headteacher, Greenwood Academy.

Chair

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Very Reverend Matthew Canon McManus and John Reid.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16.

2. Mr Jim Leckie

On 16 December, Jim Leckie, Head of Service in Education and Skills will retire from North Ayrshire Council. Mr Leckie is the last of the original team in Education and Skills from the inception of the Council in 1995/96. The Chair wished Mr Leckie all the best for a long and happy retirement. Mr Leckie is being replaced by Audrey Sutton who takes up the post on 19 December.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Education Executive held on 25 October 2011 were signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

4. Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering Our Ambitions for Post-16 Education Consultation

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the results of the consultation on post-16 provision.

In September 2011 the Scottish Government issued a consultation document "Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering Our Ambitions for Post-16 Education. The proposals involve wide-ranging reform of all aspects of Government funded post-16 education in Scotland, and focus on transition from school to training, college, university or work. The programme of reforms extends to community learning and the Third Sector.

North Ayrshire Council has been involved in the successful pilot of Activity Agreements, supporting 16/17 year olds most at risk of unemployment on leaving school. The Council is committed to supporting transition into positive post school destinations and has created significantly more opportunities for young people by expanding the Modern Apprenticeship programme. The report detailed the role of Education and Skills in this regard, in particular the role of Community Development in improving people's job prospects through employability support, youth literacies, ITC training and ESOL Learning. Community Development and Libraries is involved in raising literacy levels of parents and carers.

The Council's proposed response to the consultation was detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

Members sought, and received, clarification on a number of aspects of the report and proposed response, including more effective support mechanisms in relation to vulnerable young people and proposals in relation to regionalisation of colleges.

The Education Executive agreed to (a) note the report; (b) approve the responses to the consultation, as set out in Appendix 1 for submission to the Scottish Government; and (c) that the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) write to the Scottish Government in support of regionalisation of the Clyde Coast colleges, i.e James Watt, Reid Kerr and Clydebank Colleges.

5. Deferred Entry to Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the implementation of a system to improve administration of Deferred Entry Applications to primary schools.

The current admissions arrangements for Early Entry to primary school and for Placing Requests to both primary and secondary schools have dates by which applications and decisions require to be made. There is no such system in place for Deferred Entry requests, when parents/carers wish their child to start a year later than they might normally be expected.

Currently there is no closing date for deferred entry applications and decisions. Subsequently parent/carers have been applying then withdrawing applications after 30 April when all placing request applications have been allocated. As a result, primary 1 classes can be filled to capacity through the placing request process and are consequently unable to accommodate another catchment area pupil. The Council could then face additional and avoidable costs in employing an additional teacher.

The Education Executive agreed that (a) Deferred Entry applications should be submitted by 1 February for the following school session; (b) parents will be notified of a decision by 1 April; and (c) once authorised, decisions cannot be changed after 14 April each year.

6. Greenwood Academy, Irvine: HMIE Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the HMIE Report on Greenwood Academy, Irvine.

Greenwood Academy was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HMIE) in September 2011 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages.

HM Inspectors evaluated the quality of young people's experience in learning and teaching, the impact of strategies to raise attainment, approaches to recognising achievement, partnership working and development of leadership across the school. Members of the inspection team met the chairperson of the Parent Council, representatives of local partners and a group of parents.

The HM Inspectors report was published on 29 November 2011 and identified the following key strengths:-

- Young people participating and achieving in a wide range of opportunities;
- High quality pastoral care recognised strongly by young people;
- The commitment of the headteacher, senior management and staff to improve young people's learning in and outwith the classroom, and
- Effective partnership working to widen young people's learning and achievement.

The following areas for improvement have been agreed between HMIE, the school and the Education Authority:-

- Improve approaches to self-evaluation to raise attainment and better meet the needs of all learners; and
- Develop a stronger strategic plan for taking forward Curriculum for Excellence involving all stakeholders.

HMIE have noted that changes in the leadership structuring including newly appointed faculty heads have put the school in a stronger position to move forward. In consultation with the Director, Head of Service and staff, the headteacher has put in place plans to incorporate the recommendations of the HMIE report into the School Improvement Plan. The school and the authority will build on the strengths identified in the inspection report and work together to address the key recommendations as detailed in the report.

In terms of follow-through, HMIE will make no further visits given the level of confidence in the school and the authority to make the necessary improvements.

Mrs C. McGuire, the headteacher of the school was in attendance and answered questions from members on improving attainment, tracking progress of pupils at the end of S3, communication strategies, policies in relation to disruptive pupils and success in school leaver destinations.

The Education Executive noted the steps taken to address the key points for action, and that in terms of follow-through, HMIE will make no further visits given the level of confidence in the school to make the necessary improvements.

7. Inspection of the Learning Community Surrounding Greenwood Academy: Education Scotland Report

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the Learning Community surrounding Greenwood Academy.

Education Scotland (previously HMIE and LTScotland) carry out inspections of the learning opportunities available to the community surrounding a secondary school. Inspections cover the work of the Council's Community and Culture teams including Community Learning and Development, arts culture, libraries and children's outreach services and the work of the third Sector, volunteers and partner organisations.

Education Scotland Inspectors carried out an inspection of the learning community around Greenwood Academy, evaluating the range and quality of learning opportunities and support available to young people, adults, community organisations and specific groups such as minority ethnic groups. Members of the inspection team met staff from a range of Council services, volunteer and partner organisations.

The report by the Inspectors was published on 29 November 2011, and identified the following key strengths:-

- Wide range of high quality learning opportunities for a diverse range of community organisations, groups and individual learners provided by Community and Culture Services and partners;
- Strong work to support minority ethnic groups;
- Youth workers' very effective engagement with excluded groups of young people which impacts positively on personal and community safety;
- Staff engagement with learners, and
- Strong and effective focus on meeting the needs of communities in Irvine, Springside and Dreghorn.

The following area for improvement has been agreed between Education Scotland, the Culture and Community Team and local partners:-

- Continue to develop and broaden the approaches of all partners to contribute to the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence.

In consultation with the Community and Culture team, plans are being put in place to incorporate the recommendations of the Education Scotland report. These will be included in service improvement plans.

Proposed actions by the authority and partners to build on the strengths identified in the inspection report and work together to address areas for improvement were detailed in the report.

Community and Culture plans to address the points for improvement will be submitted to the Head of Service for approval following consultation with staff and community partners. Education Scotland have indicated that they were able to rely on the high quality of self-evaluation provided by the learning community, which enabled them to switch their focus to support further improvements within the community.

The Education Executive sought, and received, clarification on various aspects of the report.

The Education Executive noted (a) the proposals made to address the key points for action in the Inspection Report; and (b) the arrangements for follow-through.

8. Curriculum for Excellence Senior Phase

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education & Skills) on the progress to date in preparing for the implementation of the senior phase of Curriculum for Excellence.

In August 2011, the Education Executive received a Curriculum for Excellence progress report indicating that an experienced Depute Headteacher had been seconded to build on the good progress already made and to ensure close working with local Higher Education institutions and other training providers.

Since August 2011, the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) Development Officer has met with a range of colleagues in North Ayrshire, attended national events and visited a range of other local authorities.

As a result of intensive work with secondary schools a Curriculum for Excellence Framework Audit has been compiled for each secondary school.

In the first term of the secondment, the CfE Development Officer has prepared a detailed report for each school together with an overview of the current issues in relation to each senior phase. Full details were contained in Appendix 1 to the report.

Building on the six entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence, all young people can expect the following: -

- Coherent Curriculum from 3-18;
- A broad general education up to the end of S3;
- Opportunity to gain qualifications and develop further the 4 capacities;
- Opportunity to develop skills for learning, life and work and a continuous focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing;
- Personal support and challenge, and
- Support in moving to a positive and sustained destination beyond school.

Schools have developed draft curriculum models for S4-S6 Senior Phase. The draft frameworks in schools involve decreasing the number of subjects studied in third year allowing pupils to select subjects to specialise in, at level 4 from within CfE curriculum areas. An audit of the alternative school curriculum was contained in Appendix 2 to the report. An audit of Skills for Works courses was contained in Appendix 3 to the report.

The report indicated that current challenges included the requirement to ensure progression from S5/S6 pupils and the development of consortium arrangements to develop more effective sustainable partnerships with colleges and other providers. Details of current provision for Higher courses across all secondary schools were contained in Appendix 4 to the report.

The Education Executive sought, and received, clarification on a number of aspects of the report, including the non-compulsory nature of modern languages after S2.

The Education Executive (a) noted the report; and (b) agreed to receive progress reports on the action to implement the next steps outlined in Appendix 1.

The Meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.