

Education Committee  
11 March 1997

**Irvine, 11 March 1997** - At a Meeting of the Education Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

Thomas Morris, Margaret Highet, Thomas Barr, Patrick Browne, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Samuel Gooding, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, David O'Neill, Robert Rae, John Sillars, George Steven and Reverend John Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Director of Education, B. Gardner, Head of Education Resources, L. Rowson, J. Leckie, J. Tulips, Heads of Education Services (Education), D. Nibloe, Principal Officer Accountancy and Budgeting (Financial Services), S. King, Corporate Policy Officer and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr Morris in the Chair

**Apologies for Absence**

Irene Oldfather, Stef Holmer and Gordon Smith

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Local Evaluation of Nursery Education Initiative: Interim Report**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the local evaluation of the Nursery Education Initiative in North Ayrshire.

On 5 March 1996, the Committee requested that detailed implementation plans for the Nursery Education Initiative should include the establishment of an Evaluation Group. This Group which was set up in April 1996 has held regular meetings throughout the year and has undertaken research on the basis of (i) questionnaires sent to parents of all pre-school children in local authority, private and voluntary sector nurseries; (ii) ongoing observation by Heads of local authority nurseries and (iii) by a series of interviews which are currently being held with Heads of new and established local authority nurseries, voluntary and independent sector nursery providers.

Mrs Judith Gillespie, the Scottish Parent Teacher Council representative on the Evaluation Group, gave a comprehensive presentation on the analysis of the questionnaire. The general conclusions indicate that although parents are very satisfied with the nursery education being provided and have welcomed the

extensive development of places in North Ayrshire, they believe that funding should be direct and not through the voucher scheme. The scheme is seen as bureaucratic and accessing and delivering vouchers to the nursery is imposing an added pressure on some families who are already coping with difficult family situations. A significant group also found the Nursery Voucher Helpline to be of little or no assistance and it was emphasised that calls next year were likely to increase dramatically.

Other indications are that in areas where there is ample provision, vouchers will be an intrusion; there is also confusion between the English and the Scottish voucher schemes; and there is some evidence to suggest that the introduction of a relationship based on money, however notional, may become important in connection with quality of provision and partnership with parents. The interim evaluation findings indicate that problems and solutions connected with the delivery of nursery education are very localised. In the national context however difficulties will emerge with the voucher scheme which will not have been experienced in the pilot exercise.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to note the interim findings of the local Evaluation; and (b) that a further report be submitted to the Committee on the final evaluation along with financial implications.

### **3. Early Years Forum**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed establishment of an Early Years Forum in North Ayrshire.

It is proposed that an Early Years Forum be set up to (i) review local services for children and make recommendations on future developments; and (ii) draw up an Early Years Development Plan which will describe proposals for the expansion of services with a timescale, to meet the varying child care and educational needs of young families. The group will comprise the Chair or his representative, representatives of a wide range of Council Directorates and external agencies who have an interest in Early Years care and education.

The Committee agreed (a) that an Early Years Forum be established in North Ayrshire, comprising the membership detailed in the report, with the proviso that additional members can be co-opted if appropriate; and (b) that the Forum draw up a plan setting out proposals for the development of Early Years Services for submission to the Committee in due course.

### **4. Raising the Standard: Response to the White Paper**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed response to the White Paper "Raising the Standard".

On 31 January 1997, the Government published "Raising the Standard" a White Paper on Education and Skills Development and invited comments on the proposals by 28 February 1997. A copy of the Director of Education's report has been submitted to the Scottish Office following consultation with the Chair, in order to meet

the deadline, on the basis that the report was subject to final approval by the Committee.

The White Paper covers a wide range of issues involving schools, skills training, further education, higher education, life long learning and the setting up of an Advisory Council on Scottish Education and makes around 52 separate proposals. The report stated that the timescale allowed to respond to such a comprehensive document was completely unrealistic, but the response to the SOEID had, however, registered the Committee's opposition to a large number of the proposals which, if implemented, would diminish the role of local authorities in educational provision and have a highly damaging effect on Scottish schools.

The Committee agreed to approve the terms of the report as the Council's response to the White Paper "Raising the Standard".

## **5. Consultation Document: National Testing in the First Two Years of Secondary School**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed response to the Consultation Paper on National Testing.

In February 1997, the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department published a consultation paper describing three alternative proposals for the introduction of compulsory National Testing for all children in S1 and S2.

On 28 May 1996, the Committee rejected the proposal to introduce regulations which would enforce National Testing and recommended in its response that testing should be allowed to develop as an integral part of the 5 - 14 programme in secondary schools as it already had in the primary schools.

The Committee agreed (a) to continue to oppose in principle the imposition of National Tests in the first two years of secondary schools; and (b) to approve the terms of the report as the Council's response to the consultation document.

## **6. Europe Week 1997**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals for a series of events to commemorate Europe Week 1997.

Europe Week, which will be held from 3 - 9 May 1997, is intended to promote understanding about Europe and the European Union in particular. It is proposed that the Education Directorate organise a series of events to promote Europe to young people, involving as many schools as possible. Europe Week occurs immediately prior to Environment Week (10 - 18 May 1997) and the proposed events had been chosen to avoid duplication.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed programme of events involving schools to promote Europe Week 1997.

## **7. Health Education**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a range of initiatives designed to further health education in schools.

Health education is an integral part of the curriculum in all schools and encourages pupils to develop and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Areas covered include physical education, diet and hygiene, drug awareness etc. There is a designated member of staff in each school responsible for the promotion of health education. There is also liaison with various sections of the Ayrshire and Arran Community Health Care Trust and each school has an identified school Doctor and Nurse.

Over the past two years, Greenwood Academy and Largs Academy have been involved in the "Health Promoting School" project and the Greenwood Academy project won the national Flower of Scotland Schools Challenge.

There are variations in practice in relation to the provision of sex education and this is being examined with a view to bringing the level of average up to the best practice.

Additionally, the Community Dieticians are seeking to expand the "Healthy Tuck Shop" initiative, which seeks to substitute healthier food choices in school tuck shops.

In response to a number of issues raised by members in relation to pupils activities, it was emphasised that schools are endeavouring to raise awareness of health education and other related areas in partnership with school boards, parents etc and that there are many encouraging signs of improvement.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the active promotion of the "health promoting school" approach; (b) to approve the continued efforts to co-ordinate and improve practice in this area; and (c) that the Director of Education submit a report on the provision of sex education in schools to the Committee in due course.

## **8. 5 - 14 Expressive Arts: The Big Top Project**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the 5 - 14 Expressive Arts Big Top Project.

The Big Top Project is the initiative of Garnock Academy, James Reid School and Stanecastle School. The aim of the project was to allow pupils from all three schools to work together in the use of voice and instruments to link in with the 5 - 14 Expressive Arts curriculum. The Community and Recreational Services Directorate was also involved in the project, providing support and advice to the staff and pupils.

The project was highly successful, and has enabled a programme of study to be developed to help pupils with learning difficulties to access Expressive Arts 5 - 14 music. It has also resulted in the preparation of a resource pack of the whole event

which will be made available to all schools.

The Committee agreed to congratulate Garnock Academy, Stanecastle School, James Reid School and the Community and Recreational Services Directorate on the work undertaken in this project.

## **9. HMI Report: St. Mary's Primary School**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the HMI Report on St. Mary's Primary School, Largs.

St. Mary's Primary School was inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) in September 1996 as part of a national sample of primary education. The report by HMI was published on 25 February 1997, identifying a number of strengths of the school and making a number of recommendations.

The key points for action include (a) displays of pupils work to be planned to include examples of work from the maths and environmental studies curriculum; (b) the Head Teacher being requested to review the use of flexibility time to ensure that adequate time is allocated to environmental studies; and (c) the needs of the able child being identified as a priority in the school plan.

The Committee agreed to the proposed action detailed in the report.

## **10. Quality Assurance: Examination Results**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the action taken on examination results as part of the quality assurance process in North Ayrshire schools.

On 28 May 1996, the Committee approved a report setting out a policy for quality assurance and educational development in North Ayrshire, including reference to the place of examination results in this process.

The information on examination results which is available for analysis is presented in a variety of ways over a three month period and provided mainly by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. The statistics provided can be misleading due to several factors. Examination analysis can, however, provide a useful method of self evaluation for both schools and for the education authority, if it is used within the overall framework of school improvement and takes into account the social context of individual schools. Within the context of quality assurance, examination results should be used to (a) review and report the overall performance of schools in North Ayrshire on an annual basis; (b) identify and disseminate good practice in the use of analysis as a means of self evaluation; (c) identify and disseminate good practice in subjects where performance is particularly good; (d) take corrective action to improve performance in specific subjects in conjunction with Principal Teachers; and (e) promote staff development opportunities to meet specific needs.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to approve the quality assurance

procedures as outlined; and (b) that an annual report on examination performance in North Ayrshire schools be submitted to the Committee.

## **11. School Attendance Project**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals for a pilot project designed to determine and implement strategies in order to improve levels of schools attendance.

The pilot project has been initiated to establish the extent and causes of absences from the schools involved and to devise and implement appropriate methods for improving school attendance. The project will take place during 1997/98 and the findings will be circulated to all other schools in North Ayrshire.

The guidelines from the Scottish Office on categorising absences are acknowledged to be imprecise and discussions are in progress at present with schools to ensure that within North Ayrshire a uniform standard is applied for interpreting unauthorised absence.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the arrangements for the pilot project targeting the improvement of attendance in the cluster group of Irvine Royal Academy and its associated primary schools; and (b) that the Director of Education report on the outcome of the project to the Committee in due course.

## **12. Transport Arrangements for Children with Special Educational Needs**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a review of the contractual arrangements for the transport of children with special education needs.

On 28 May 1996, the Committee agreed to award school transport contracts for a period of one year for children with special needs and for children with medical conditions. During the course of the year, a number of issues have arisen and proposals have been drawn up to address these.

The Committee agreed (a) that contracts for the transport to school of pupils with special educational needs be amended to include the following conditions viz.:- (i) that all children should be provided with a seat equipped with a seat belt; (ii) that drivers and escort, if required, meet with school staff and the child's parents to receive a briefing on any medical needs or conditions of the child and a briefing note be made available to the contractor and carried in the vehicle whenever the child is being transported; and (iii) that all vehicles carry a means of emergency contact, either a mobile telephone or a radio; and (b) that as soon as possible within the terms of the legal requirements, contracts are awarded for either a two or three year period to allow greater continuity.

### **13. Greenwood Academy: Sight and Hearing Impaired Project**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the achievements of Greenwood Academy in the Barclay's New Futures Awards 1996.

The Barclay's New Futures Project offers financial and professional support to help schools take positive action to benefit their communities. The projects are open to any school nationwide to bid for resources.

Greenwood Academy was one of only eight schools successful in Scotland and was awarded £3,000.00 for its Sight and Hearing Impaired Project, working with staff and pupils at Haysholm School.

The Greenwood Academy pupils have been learning signing in order to communicate with hearing impaired children and have made a video which will assist other pupils. A sensory garden is also planned which will improve the quality of life of sight impaired elderly persons.

The Committee agreed to congratulate Greenwood Academy on the achievement of its pupils in this national competition.

### **14. Policy Reviews: Progress Report**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on progress in the review of areas of education policy.

On 5 March 1996, the Committee agreed that reviews of policy in various areas be initiated and that proposals for North Ayrshire Council policies in each of these areas should be submitted to the Committee in due course.

Details were given of the current position in relation to each of the established policy review groups.

The Committee agreed (a) to note progress to date in the policy review process; and (b) that an annual report on exclusions be submitted to the Committee.

### **15. Footwear and Clothing Grants 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed level of footwear and clothing grant for 1997/98.

The Committee agreed that the footwear and clothing grant level for session 1997/98 be set at £50.00.

#### **16. Pre-5 Voluntary Sector Grants 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed award of grants to voluntary organisations providing Pre-5 Services.

The Committee agreed to approve the award of grants in 1997/98 to voluntary organisations providing pre-5 services to children under 4 years of age, as detailed in Appendix E1.

#### **17. Adult Returners: Creche Grants 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed award of grants to support the provision of crèches in schools.

The Committee agreed to approve the award of crèche grants in 1997/98 as detailed in Appendix E2.

#### **18. Grants to Voluntary Organisations: Supporting School Provision 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed award of grants to voluntary organisations supporting curricular provision in schools.

The Committee approved the award of grants for 1997/98 to voluntary organisations supporting curricular provision in schools as detailed in Appendix E3.

#### **19 Grants to Voluntary Organisations: Adult Education Provision 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed award of grants to voluntary organisations providing support for formal adult education within the community.

The Committee approved the award of adult education grants for 1997/98 as detailed in Appendix E4.

#### **20. Delegation of Powers to Strathclyde Passenger Transport**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals to delegate power to Strathclyde Passenger Transport to enable short term contracts to be arranged in certain circumstances.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport arrange mainstream school transport on behalf of the Education Directorate, with tenders being sought and approved by the Committee.

Occasionally unforeseen difficulties arise which can lead to the withdrawal of the services of a particular contractor and in such circumstances it is necessary to



arrange transport at short notice.

The Committee agreed to delegate powers to Strathclyde Passenger Transport to arrange short term transport contracts in circumstances when a contractor has to withdraw from a school contract at short notice, provided that (a) the provision does not extend beyond 10 working days before competitive tenders are sought; and (b) the cost of the provision is no more than £20,000.00.

## **21. Agency Agreement: School Transport**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on changes proposed by the Strathclyde Passenger Transport to the agency agreement for the securing of school transport.

An annual fee is paid to Strathclyde Passenger Transport, who act as agents of the Council in arranging the provision of school transport. Following a review of its operation during the last year, SPT are seeking agreement in principle to amend the agreement so that the annual cost to each local authority more accurately reflects the service required by that authority rather than being based on a flat rate fee derived from the size of the authority.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Director of Education be authorised to enter into negotiations with SPT on the agency agreement; and (b) that a further report be submitted to the Committee on the conclusion of these negotiations.

## **22. Investors in People (IIP) Award**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the success of Largs Academy in gaining the Investors in People Award.

On 29 October 1996, the Education Committee agreed that a report be submitted to the Committee at the evaluation stage of the Investors in People pilot initiative which is a prestigious national award based on a rigorous evaluation of management and quality assurance. Each school has continued to work towards achievement of the award.

Following an assessment in January 1997 by IIP Scotland, Largs Academy has been successful in obtaining an Investors in People Award.

The Committee agreed to congratulate Largs Academy on its success.

The meeting ended at 3.25 p.m.

**Education Committee**  
**11/03/97**

Appendix No  
**E1-4**

**Pre 5 Voluntary Sector Grants 1997/98**

<b><u>Organisation</u></b>	<b><u>Award</u></b>
Strathclyde Pre-School Play Association	£5,000.00 interim award - subject to outcome of programme review
Strathclyde Childminding Association	£1,200.00
Strathclyde Early Years Voluntary Sector Forum	Continued for a report back.
One Plus - One Parent Families	£2,700.00
Association of Strathclyde Link-Up Groups	£ 100.00
Action for Sick Children	£ 70.00
Mobile Projects Association Scotland	£ 50.00
East Irvine Nursery numbers Action Group (Broomlands)	£8,300.00 subject to on-going review of numbers
East Irvine Nursery numbers Action Group (Bourtreehill)	£ 450.00 subject to on-going review of numbers
Parkhouse Playgroup (SEN) Ardrossan - Bid 1	£8,200.00
Parkhouse Playgroup (SEN)Ardrossan - Bid 2	£2,000.00
Beith Nursery Ltd	Nil
Springside Playgroup Irvine	£ 500.00

Fullarton Pre 5 Project Irvine	£ 500.00
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## **Appendix E2**

### **North Ayrshire Council**

#### **Adult Returners - Creche Grants 1997/98**

<b><u>Organisation</u></b>	<b><u>Award</u></b>
Irvine Royal Academy	£5,000.00
Greenwood Academy	£3,200.00
St. Andrew's Academy	£4,600.00
Arran High School	£ 600.00

## **Appendix E3**

### **North Ayrshire Council**

#### **Grants to Voluntary Organisations Supporting School Provision 1997/98**

<b><u>Organisation</u></b>	<b><u>Award</u></b>
Scottish Development Education Centre	£ 40.00
Jamiat Ittihad-Ul-Muslimin	£180.00
Scottish Council for Educational Technology	£720.00
Scottish Council for Research in Education	£720.00
The Scottish Ballet	£450.00
Scottish Parent Teacher	£ 90.00

Council	
Scottish Opera	£450.00
Scottish Mask and Puppet Centre	£270.00
Scottish Maritime Museum	£225.00
TAG Theatre Company	£450.00
The National Trust for Scotland	£460.00

#### **Appendix E4**

### **North Ayrshire Council**

#### **Grants to Voluntary Organisations - Adult Education 1997/98**

<b><u>Organisation</u></b>	<b><u>Award</u></b>
University of Glasgow	£1,400.00
Workers Educational Association (WEA) Teaching and Direct Agency	£5,600.00
WEA 3 Towns Resource Fund	£1,300.00
Argyle Community Association	£1,400.00
Whitlees Community Association	£1,400.00