

Education Committee  
10 March 1998

**Irvine, 10 March 1998** - At a Meeting of the Education Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

Thomas Morris, Irene Oldfather, Margaret Highet, Thomas Barr, James Clements, John Donn, Samuel Gooding, Stef Holmer, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, Evelyn Sillars, John Sillars, Gordon Smith and George Steven.

**In Attendance**

The Director of Education, B. Gardner, Head of Educational Resources, J. Leckie, J. Tulips and L. Owens, Heads of Education Services, J. Ward, Adviser (Education); A. Herbert, Head of Accountancy (Financial Services); S. King, Corporate Policy Officer and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr. Morris in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Thomas Dickie and Reverend John Taylor.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 27 January 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Target Setting: Raising Standards**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the implications of Government proposals to develop a framework for setting targets for improvement in all schools in Scotland which are to be introduced in the school year 1998/99.

The framework which fits well with the Quality Assurance and School Planning Policies previously agreed by the Council requires all schools to set targets in key areas of attainment and the development of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy to be achieved by the year 2001. The report provided details on the key principles on which the framework has been founded and on the manner of the setting and achieving of targets within the key target areas. It also confirmed that comparisons of the levels of performance already achieved by similar schools will provide the essential benchmark information from which targets will be derived and will ensure the introduction of targets which are realistic and achievable.

Agreement will require to be reached between each school and its Education Authority on the target levels of improvement to be incorporated in its development plan and a timetable has been set within the framework for all targets in Higher Grade and Standard Grade and all targets in 5-14 attainment. The targets set will be a focus for planning and improvements across the school system and it is intended to support schools in implementing this Initiative in a variety of ways through New Deal funding. The Ministerial Action Group on Standards in Schools, which developed the new framework will be asked to review the progress and content of the targets set and to consider the monitoring and reporting of performance at national, education authority and

school level.

The Committee agreed to receive further reports on the implementation of this Initiative.

### **3. Higher Still Implementation Strategy**

Submitted report by the Director of Education presenting an Implementation Strategy for the Higher Still Development Programme in North Ayrshire, including a calendar of key dates and a check list for its implementation, to assist schools to prepare for implementation in August 1999.

It is proposed that the Council Strategy will seek to have schools progress Higher Still developments within the context of school planning. The Council has included the Higher Still Development Programme within its priorities for school planning for sessions 1997/98 and 1998/99 and the Strategy will detail the key elements to be addressed at education authority, school and departmental level. The school plan will also identify the targets and tasks to be undertaken to progress developments.

The key elements of the Strategy are as follows:-

- The Higher Still Advisory Group has a key role to play in informing, monitoring and reviewing the strategy;
- Current provision in S5 and S6 should inform and direct the range of Higher Still units and courses offered by schools in August 1999;
- It is not envisaged that schools will offer the whole range of Higher Still units and courses in the early years of implementation;
- The Higher Still Development Unit meets regularly with representatives from local authorities;
- It is proposed that each school should now establish a Higher Still Co-ordinating Group led by Senior Management and including an identified Higher Still Co-ordinator;
- A Review of current provision in S5 and S6 is the first step in planning to implement Higher Still arrangements;
- The Higher Still Programme in North Ayrshire will best be taken forward by the ten secondary schools working in partnership with the Higher Still Development Unit and local colleges;
- Staff development for Senior Management, Principal Teachers and classroom teachers is a key element in the Implementation Strategy;
- The authority proposes to collaborate with East and South Ayrshire to support staff in Special Schools prepare to implement Higher Still developments;
- Subject co-ordinators will support the staff development programme by co-ordinating subject based developments;
- Managing Guidance provision in S5 and S6 is a key element in implementing Higher Still developments; and
- As we move closer to implementation in August 1999 consideration has to be given to information and publicity for students, school boards and parents. The Higher Still Information and Publicity Group will produce leaflets to inform these groups of Higher Still provision.

Funding of Higher Still developments will be met from the existing staff development budget devolved to schools and dedicated funding from the Higher Still Development Unit. In addition, the Higher Still Information and Publicity Group will produce leaflets to inform students, school boards and parents on the Higher Still Development Programme which is now fairly well advanced.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the Implementation Strategy for issue to schools.

### **4. New Deal for Schools**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals for expenditure under the Government's New Deal for Schools which represents an addition of over £1m in the funding available to North Ayrshire schools.

The Government has identified the raising of standards as a priority which must be

addressed by New Deal funding and an analysis has been carried out to determine the priorities in North Ayrshire. The proposals which have been developed take account of the local needs which have been identified, the national priorities set by the Government and the policies previously adopted by the Council. Accordingly, schools in North Ayrshire will receive assistance in preparing for the Government's Target Setting Initiative together with intensive support for the preparation, timetabling, staff training and materials development for Higher Still courses. Students at risk of social exclusion will also be given additional help to maximise their access to educational opportunities and support will be provided for modern languages and music. In addition, help will be given to schools who have faced increasing pressures due in recent years to lack of funding for teaching materials and equipment and support will be channelled towards supported study programmes, improved IT skills and increased access to technology, work experience and enterprise education, and the Early Intervention Programme. Funding will be provided to support initiatives such as the Investors in People Award and the promotion of regular attendance in schools.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the allocation of New Deal funding in the terms indicated in the report; (b) to receive further reports on the implementation of these measures; and (c) that arrangements be made for the Chair, Vice-Chairs and the Director of Education to meet with the press to outline the impact of the New Deal funding on schools in North Ayrshire.

#### **5. Staffing Support to Combat Educational Disadvantage: Transitional Relief for Session 1998/99**

On 28 October 1997 the Committee agreed the reallocation of additional resources to schools to combat educational disadvantage but an element of the resource amounting to five full-time equivalent (FTE) staff was retained for further consideration.

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed utilisation of the remaining staffing resources to provide additional transition relief during session 1998/99 only, to schools losing historical levels of staff enhancement following the introduction of the new staff allocation model. These proposals provide an additional share of the five FTE resource for schools due to lose 0.5 FTE staffing or more with the share being calculated in proportion to the scale of the overall change in each school.

The Schools which will benefit to varying degrees are:-

(a) Secondary Schools

- (i) Ardrossan Academy;
- (ii) Auchenharvie Academy, Stevenston;
- (iii) Irvine Royal Academy; and
- (iv) St Andrew's Academy, Saltcoats

(b) Primary Schools

- (i) Ardeer, Stevenston;
- (ii) Caledonia, Saltcoats;
- (iii) Hayocks, Stevenston;
- (iv) Loudoun-Montgomery, Irvine;
- (v) Stanley, Ardrossan; and
- (vi) St Anthony's, Saltcoats.

The Committee agreed to approve these proposals.

#### **6. Appeals Committees: Additional Membership**

Submitted report by the Director of Education seeking approval for representation on Appeals Committees from Members of Local Attendance Councils.

The Committee agreed to approve the inclusion of the 43 members listed in the report, to the membership lists from which Appeal Committee members are chosen, with the addition of a late submission on behalf of Mr. Dennis Roos of the Hunterston Local Attendance Council.

#### **7. Processing of Footwear and Clothing Grants**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposal to advertise for retailers within a local outlet capable of exchanging children's clothing for gift vouchers.

It is proposed to replace the existing system of footwear and clothing grants inherited from Strathclyde Regional Council from a system of cash payment to one where qualifying parents would receive a gift voucher which could be redeemed for footwear and clothing via the retailer who offers the Council the most significant discount in return for guaranteeing expenditure in relation to Children's footwear and clothing. Details were given on the financial advantages to the Council, the measures which would be effected to avoid social stigma and the conditions of contract which would apply to the successful retailer.

The Committee agreed to introduce a footwear and clothing grant system based on vouchers.

#### **8. Provisions for Hearing Impaired Pupils**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the outcome of a consultation on the creation of a unit for pupils with hearing impairments in Towerlands Primary School, Irvine, to replace the facilities and teaching currently provided at West Park School in Crosshouse, Kilmarnock and to provide the children with further social and educational opportunities.

The overwhelming response has been one of strong support for the proposal with only two parents from Towerlands Primary School expressing opposition. On this basis it is considered that the proposal for a new unit is the correct one for hearing impaired pupils.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) that a unit for hearing impaired pupils be established in Towerlands Primary School, Irvine; and (b) that the unit should seek to admit pupils from August 1998 or as soon as possible thereafter.

#### **9. Provision for Pupils with Communication Disorders**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the outcome of consultation on a proposal to relocate the unit for primary aged pupils with communication disorders from Stanecastle School, Irvine to Dreghorn Primary School.

Full details on the consultation process were provided including information on the twenty-three responses received. Whilst there was a good deal of support for the proposal, reservations had been expressed by six of the ten families whose children currently attend the Stanecastle Unit and who were anxious about any change, given their confidence in the current school provision. It was considered that these difficulties could be addressed and that overall the goal of a primary based unit is a good one which will provide better opportunities for the children and increase flexibility of provision.

After discussion the Committee agreed that (a) the unit for primary aged pupils with communication disorders should be transferred from Stanecastle School, Irvine to Dreghorn

Primary; (b) the transfer should take place in August 1999 for all new entrants to the unit from August 1998 onwards; and (c) parents of the remaining existing children would have the option of transferring to Dreghorn Primary in August 1999 or remaining for a final year at the Stanecastle unit.

#### **10. Nursery Provision in West Kilbride**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposal to consult the local community on the proposed establishment of a local authority nursery class in West Kilbride Primary School from August 1998 following approaches from their School Board and from members of the local community.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal to undertake a consultation on future nursery provision in West Kilbride.

#### **11. Comparative Costs of School Heating Systems**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the comparative costs of coal and gas heating systems within schools.

The proposed conversion to gas heating plant is intended to focus on heating systems in schools which are 25-30 years old and are beyond economical repair. Although at present the basic cost of gas is slightly higher than coal, when increased efficiency is taken into account the operating costs are lower. The main reasons for seeking to convert to gas heating systems in schools are that there is a benefit to the school in terms of the duties of the janitorial staff, the cost of replacing the boilers varies considerably between coal and gas and a cost benefit is derived from the operating of the heating system to provide the required temperatures within a school through a saving in the use of raw fuel. It was however emphasised that the future replacement of inefficient and outdated coal fired boilers to gas in schools will require to be implemented as and when finances permit.

Noted.

#### **12. Bursary Policy: Academic Session 1998/99**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Further Education and High School Bursary Policy for academic session 1998/99.

During academic session 1997/98 no significant difficulties have arisen with the operation of the Council's existing bursary policy and there are at present no recommendations from COSLA for amendments to this policy. Accordingly, no changes are proposed to the range of courses that will be supported under the terms of the new bursary policy or the contribution threshold levels for parental contributions or the allowances for further education students. In the light of the budget savings agreed by the Council for 1998/99 it is however proposed that the Higher School Bursary Award be adjusted from £18.65 per week to £16.00 per week.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the continuation of the Council's existing Policy on Further Education and Higher School Bursaries into academic session 1998/99; and (b) that the allowance level for higher school bursaries be set at £16.00 per week.

#### **13. North Ayrshire Schoolgirls' Football**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a request for sponsorship of a schoolgirls league and cup competition for 1998/99.

Girls football is a growing sport in Scotland and West of Scotland Schoolgirls' League and Cup competitions have been successfully organised over the last two years. Seven North Ayrshire secondary schools have indicated an interest in participating in a local competition for which the

cost of trophies and engraving etc. would be £250.

The Committee agreed to sponsor schoolgirls' football in North Ayrshire.

#### **14. European Funded Initiatives**

Submitted report by the Director of Education providing comprehensive details of the extensive programme of initiatives throughout Europe involving North Ayrshire Schools, all of which are European funded.

Noted.

#### **15. Educational Links with Bordeaux and Karmoy**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on an invitation received from the Rectorat de l'Academie de Bordeaux to the Chair and officers of the Education Directorate to participate in a planning meeting in Bordeaux in March 1998 to organise future activities and consolidate North Ayrshire's partnership with Bordeaux and Karmoy.

The Committee agreed (a) to authorise acceptance of the invitation; and (b) that the Council be represented by the Chair, the Head of Service for Primary Education and a language specialist from the voluntary sector.

#### **16. Achieving Success in S1 and S2**

Submitted report by the Director of Education summarising the content and conclusions of a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate on achieving success in the first two years of secondary education, and presenting specific proposals for action within North Ayrshire schools to meet this objective viz.

- The implementation of 5-14 and National Testing as an authority priority to be included in all secondary school plans for 1998/99;
- Target setting;
- Schools will be required to detail their plans for the implementation of 5-14 National Testing as part of the schools planning process, to evaluate the development and provide evidence of its implementation;
- The designated Adviser for each secondary school will support the Head Teacher and senior management team in drawing up the Plan and will monitor aspects of its implementation;
- The provision of in-service courses on aspects of 5-14 including National Testing;
- The provision of seminars on the implementations of the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals as detailed in the report.

#### **17. Nursery Provision in Stevenston**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals to re-organise current nursery provision in Stevenston to better meet the needs of the local community.

The recent Nursery Registration Week has demonstrated that many more parents would wish a nursery place at Ardeer Primary School than can currently be accommodated and many parents find Auchenharvie Community Nursery inconvenient. To address these issues the extension which is currently being built at Ardeer Primary School will accommodate up to 40 per-school children and the nursery class at Auchenharvie Academy will be directly linked to the Bilingual Support Unit thereby providing a valuable addition to the facilities for bilingual families in North Ayrshire. Unison will be fully consulted in the event that any relocation of staff is required.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the creation of a larger nursery class in Ardeer Primary School; and (b) the re-organisation of the existing nursery facility in Auchenharvie



Academy.

### **18. Higher Still Arts Developments**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on two joint projects which are to be undertaken in conjunction with the Higher Still Development Unit involving (i) a specialist in the field of composition, arranging and conducting who will work with students and teachers on the composition elements of Higher Still Music; and (ii) a practising sculptor who will work with students and teachers on the Related Studies Element of the Higher Still Art and Design Course.

The projects will be funded by the Higher Still Development Unit and the Scottish Arts Council at a total cost of £8,400 and the Council's contribution will be in the form of staff expertise and time.

The Committee agreed to approve these proposals.

### **19. Surplus Property: Land at Springvale Nursery School/Three Towns Community Nursery, Saltcoats**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposal to declare surplus to requirements land within the campus of Springvale Nursery School/Three Towns Community Nursery in Saltcoats.

Due to the inadequacy of the existing car parking facilities and traffic congestion problems within the campus, it is proposed on the grounds of safety to provide additional off street parking facilities on this land which lies in Links Road. The Director of Housing has confirmed that the cost of providing these, estimated at £21,500 can be met from the Housing Services budget in the current financial year.

The Committee agreed to (a) declare the area of land detailed in the report surplus to requirements; and (b) remit to the Support Services Committee to approve the terms of disposal with the recommendation that the land be used for the provision of off street parking.

### **20. Early Intervention Programme**

Submitted report by the Director of Education detailing progress in the implementation of the Council's Early Intervention Programme in literacy and numeracy which was approved on 5 August 1997.

Noted.

### **21. Review Group: School Transport**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a proposal to establish a Member/Officer Review Group to consider the provision of school transport with particular reference to contractual arrangements, the relationship with SPT, Best Value issues and the behaviour of pupils using school transport.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the establishment of this Review Group; and (b) to nominate Councillors Munro, Sillars, Donn and Dickie and Father Matthew McManus to serve on the Group.

## **22. Flagship Concert**

The Committee agreed that the officers involved in the production of the Flagship Concert held in St Michael's Academy, Kilwinning on 1 March 1998, be congratulated on the outstanding success of the event.

The Meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.