

Education Committee  
23 February 1999

**Irvine, 23 February 1999** - At a meeting of the Education Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 pm.

**Present**

Thomas Morris, Irene Oldfather, Margaret Highet, Thomas Barr, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, Gordon Smith, George Steven and Rev John Taylor.

**In Attendance**

J Travers, Corporate Director, B Gardner, Head of Education Resources, J Tulips, J Leckie, L Owens, Heads of Education Services and A McGonigle, Adviser (Educational Services), L Morton, Assistant Principal Officer (Finance), M McCormick, Media Relations Officer and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive's).

**Chair**

Mr Morris in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Patrick Browne, Samuel Gooding, Stef Holmer, Robert Rae, Evelyn Sillars and John Sillars.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 January 1999, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Targeting Excellence: Modernising Scotland's Schools**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) giving a comprehensive summary of the proposals contained in the Government's recently published White Paper entitled 'Targeting Excellence: Modernising Scotland's Schools'.

Noted.

**3. Books for School Libraries**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on Government funding available under the Grant for Improvements in School Education (Scotland) Regulations 1998 for the purchase of books for school libraries.

The total grant available to North Ayrshire Council amounts to £67,233 which will require to be used by 31 March 1999. The funding will be allocated on the basis of £3 per pupil with smaller schools receiving a minimum grant of £300. Details of the allocations to individual schools were given in the report. It is proposed that the new grant funding will be transferred directly to the schools to enable purchases to be made in the current financial year.

The Committee agreed to welcome the new grant which will assist efforts to raise standards of

literacy.

#### **4. New Opportunities Fund: ICT Training for Teachers**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals in connection with the invitation from the New Opportunities Fund to apply for ICT trainer provider status in relation to teachers and school librarians.

The Government's programme to introduce a National Grid for Learning providing training for teachers and school librarians in the practical applications of Information and Communication Technology, is to be funded through the New Opportunities Fund. The Fund previously sought bids from organisations who wished to be accredited as training providers and, thereafter, schools and local authorities will be able to commission training through the resources to be made available to every teacher and school librarian for the purpose of accessing this training. The task of becoming a training provider for classroom teachers will entail considerable resourcing to meet the needs of teachers across all subjects and the funds available will not cover the cost of the exercise. An option is provided whereby various parties can work together in partnership to provide the training. Accordingly, the decision was taken not to proceed with a bid for teacher training provider status and it is proposed to pursue further the option of a partnership approach.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposal that the Education Service in due course, enter into a contract with an approved New Opportunities Fund Approved Training Provider for the provision of ICT training to teachers and librarians; and (b) to support the decision by the Education Service not to proceed with a bid for ICT Training Provider Status.

#### **5. Pre-School Education: Support for Private and Voluntary Sector Providers**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the support currently provided to private and voluntary sector pre-school centres including details of additional payments to be made to each group.

For the period August 1998 - June 1999, £442,000 is being paid directly to 30 private and voluntary sector groups validated by the Scottish Office to provide nursery education. This represents £850 for each registered child. £150,800 of grant funding has been managed by the Council itself to provide support services to the 30 private and voluntary sector pre-five centres full details of which were provided in the report. It is further proposed that an additional £100 per place be paid to each private and voluntary sector group in 2 instalments in March and June which brings the payment for each nursery place commissioned by the Council to £950. The Scottish Office has recently allocated additional grant funding of £49,000 for development purposes and details were provided of the allocation of this funding. Private and voluntary sector providers in North Ayrshire will, therefore, have received £1,005 per child in total for 1998/99 in addition to the quality assurance, administration, staff development and central resources provided by the Council.

The Committee agreed to approve the award of the additional payments to each group in the terms indicated in a report.

#### **6. Inter-Authority Payments for Special Educational Needs**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals to set new levels of inter-authority fees for accessing North Ayrshire Council's special schools and units.

A COSLA review, following local government reorganisation, recommended that local agreements on charging should be reached and accordingly the 12 successor authorities to the former Strathclyde Regional Council agreed to an annual fee of £10,550 for 1996/97. To date the flat rate basis has remained in place, the current rate being £11,528 per pupil. COSLA has now recommended that a new model of inter-authority fee setting should be established for 1999/2000 and beyond and comprehensive details on new COSLA guidelines in this regard were given in the report together with

details of the draft charges proposed for 1999/2000.

The Committee agreed (a) that the COSLA guidance on inter-authority fees be adopted for use in North Ayrshire; and (b) to approve the proposed fees for 1999/2000 as detailed in the report.

#### **7. Nursery Provision in Saltcoats**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals for the expansion and reorganisation of nursery provision in Saltcoats.

The report gave details of problems in relation to nursery provision in the Mayfield area of Saltcoats, currently located at Springvale Nursery, and highlighted a need for more accessible facility to be provided. Additionally there has been an upsurge in demand for places for babies at the Three Towns Community Nursery which cannot be fully met.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the opening of a 20 place nursery class in Mayfield School in August 1999; and (b) the relocation of the Special Educational Needs Unit, currently located the Three Towns Community Nursery, to Springvale Nursery School.

#### **8. The Scottish University for Industry (SUfi): Development Project**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Government's Scottish University for Industry Programme and an associated pilot programme funded under the ESF-ADAPT Programme.

The Scottish University for Industry Programme is designed to promote lifelong learning and skills enhancement within communities and businesses. It is anticipated that by the year 2002 2.5m people/businesses per year will be using the range of information services available and that over 600,000 per year will be pursuing associated programmes of learning. It is further anticipated that over £16.3m will be committed to establishing the project over the next 3 years. Comprehensive details were also provided on an associated pilot project called Learning and Information for Everyone in Rural Scotland (LIFERS). This involves the local enterprise company and a number of educational establishments working in partnership. This programme aims to provide education and skills enhancement to employees from small and medium sized enterprises and the project budget is £862,084.

The Committee agreed that the Education Service offer support in kind to the ESF-ADAPT pilot project where possible.

#### **9. Time for Teaching: Improving Administration in Schools**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a joint report published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and the Accounts Commission for Scotland entitled 'Time for Teaching: Improving Administration in Schools' the findings of which are based on examples of good practice in some Scottish schools.

The Committee agreed to appoint a Working Group to examine the implications of the report for individual schools and for the Education Authority.

#### **10. Learning and Teaching Forum**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals for the setting up of a Learning and Teaching Forum which would provide opportunities for teachers to learn about recent research initiatives in learning and teaching, share good practice with colleagues and use the knowledge gained to improve their teaching. During 1999/2000 the forum would be available to staff in all schools on a voluntary basis and the programme would initially contain a series of seminars focusing on specific aspects of learning and teaching.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposal to set up a Learning and Teaching Forum.

#### **11. Bursary Policy: Academic Session 1999/2000**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the Further Education and Higher School Bursary Policy for academic session 1999/2000.

It is understood that no advice on allowance levels and contribution scale thresholds for bursaries will be offered by COSLA for the academic session 1999/2000 and, accordingly, each council is expected to set its own levels within the financial resources available. It is proposed that the existing policy in North Ayrshire, which has operated successfully, be continued subject to minor modifications, and that the existing allowances and contribution threshold levels be maintained.

The Committee agreed to approve the continuation of the Council's existing policy on Further Education and Higher School Bursaries into academic session 1999/2000 subject to the following amendments:-

(i) The rules on residential eligibility be modified to reflect the guidance contained within the Education Authority Bursary and Students Allowances (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1997; and

(ii) The following paragraph in relation to the support provided for dance and drama courses be included in the bursary policy:-

“ In the event that a student secures a place on a dance or drama course in an institution which receives core financial support from Central Government, support provided via the Bursary Policy may be modified to exclude the payment of fees”.

#### **12. Follow-Up to HMI Inspections**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress made by North Ayrshire schools in responding to the recommendations of HMI Inspection Reports. Five schools in North Ayrshire have received follow-up inspections to date and in each case HM Inspectors have commented favourably on progress in relation to a number of matters details of which were given in the report. The five schools concerned had made either good or very good progress in addressing the recommendations and no further HMI visits will be undertaken in relation to these reports.

The Committee agreed to commend the Head Teacher and staff of each school for their work in addressing the recommendations.

#### **13. Higher Still Implementation**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the current position on Higher Still Implementation, including details of North Ayrshire's phased implementation programme, the key elements of the implementation strategy and proposed future developments, including associated financial implications.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the ongoing programme for implementation; and (b) that further reports on the progress of the programme be submitted.

#### **14. Protection of Children at Work**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on proposals for the provision of new by-laws on the Protection of Children at Work.

Following a consultation exercise, the Government has now decided to implement a Directive on the employment of young people at work. The principal measures of the regulations are a requirement for children to have at least 2 weeks per year free from work during school holidays and a prohibition on 13 year olds working in any job not expressly specified in the by-laws. Legal and Regulatory Services

have confirmed that the current by-laws in this regard are in conflict with the new Regulations. A model by-law reflecting the new requirements has been issued and whilst its adoption is not mandatory, legal advice is that the new model by-law, full details of which were given in the report, be adopted by the Council.

The Committee agreed (a) that the model by-law prepared by Legal and Regulatory Services be adopted for the protection of children at work in North Ayrshire in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) that a report be submitted to the Secretary of State seeking approval of this by-law.

#### **15. Careers Service: Contract Renewal**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the revised arrangements proposed by the Scottish Office for the renewal of the contract for the delivery of the Careers Service in Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed negotiations strategy in the terms indicated in the report.

#### **16. Early Intervention: Progress Report**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the progress made in the implementation of the Early Intervention Programme in literacy and numeracy.

The report gave details on a number of areas of continuing improvement resulting from the Early Intervention Programme and confirmed that the following conclusions have been drawn from the results of assessments:-

- The Early Intervention Programme has had a very positive effect on the reading progress of children in the participating schools.
  - The effect of deprivation on progress in the first year of primary school appears to have been redressed by the Early Intervention Programme.
  - There is no difference in the overall progress of boys and girls.
  - Less able children make the most significant gains as a result of Early Intervention.
- Noted.

#### **17. Sex Education Policy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on a proposal to issue a policy statement prepared by the Sex Education Review Group for consultation to schools, School Boards, church representatives, Health Authorities and other relevant agencies including the Teacher Trade Unions. The Sex Education Review Group, established in June 1998, has met on 4 occasions to examine the current practice and attitudes to sex education in schools and full details of the proposed draft policy statement were given in the report.

The Committee agreed (a) that the draft Sex Education Policy Statement as outlined in the report be issued for consultation; and (b) that a final report be submitted to a further meeting of the Council following the conclusion of the consultation exercise.

#### **18. HMI Report: Greenwood Academy**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the findings of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools following an inspection at Greenwood Academy between October and November 1998 as part of a national sample of secondary education.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the key points for action contained within the Inspection Report.

**19. HMI Report: Dalry Nursery School**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the findings of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools following an inspection at Dalry Nursery School in October 1998 as part of a national sample of nursery education.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals to address the key points for action contained within the Inspection Report.

**20. Education Committee Achievements 1996-99**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) giving a comprehensive summary of the achievements of the Education Committee during the period April 1996 to February 1999.

The Committee welcomed the report and agreed that the Corporate Director (Educational Services) write to all Head Teachers and Chairs of School Boards to express appreciation of their contribution towards the achievements of the Council during its term of office.

**21. Presentation to Chair**

At the close of the meeting the Chair was presented with a framed photographic illustration to commemorate his service as Chair of the Education Committee from 1996-99.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm.