

Education Committee  
28 May 1996

**Irvine, 28 May 1996** - 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, Patrick Browne, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Father Matthew McManus, David Munn, Alan Munro, Robert Rae, Evelyn Sillars, John Sillars, Gordon Smith, George Steven and Reverend John Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive, the Director of Education, Brian Gardner (Head of Education Resources) Lesley Rowson, Jim Tulips and Jim Leckie (Heads of Education Services) Alistair Herbert (Head of Accountancy Services) George Heaney (Strathclyde Passenger Transport) and an Administration Officer (Sandra Bale).

**Chair**

Mr Morris in the Chair

**Apologies for Absence**

James Clements, Thomas Dickie, Samuel Gooding, Peter McNamara and David O'Neill

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minute of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 April 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Quality Assurance and Educational Development**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Policy Document on Quality Assurance and Education Development.

In March 1996 a consultation paper was prepared by a working group on quality assurance and educational development which included representatives from the Quality Assurance Unit, the Educational Development Service and Head Teachers from the primary and secondary sectors. The responses to the consultation exercise from schools and from trade unions have been taken into consideration in revising the policy document.

There was general support for the recognition of the importance of school self evaluation and for development planning as the cornerstone of quality assurance. Respondents generally welcomed the proposal to use a uniform format for the development plan and agreed on the need to establish an annual development planning cycle including regular support and monitoring visits to schools. A significant number of schools expressed interest in the use of quality systems.

Concern was expressed about the level of subject expertise which would be available to secondary schools and sector support for primary and special schools. There are six permanent advisors and additional full time equivalent posts are being used flexibly to provide subject expertise.

There was however a recognition of the importance of reviewing arrangements for staff development and appraisal and it was proposed to set up a working group to review arrangements.

The Director of Education confirmed that the trade unions would be consulted on this review.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) that the policy document on quality assurance and educational development be issued to all schools; (b) that a report be submitted to the Support Services Committee in relation to the Advisory Service staffing structure; (c) that a programme of in-service training be initiated to prepare Advisory Service staff for their new roles; (d) that a survey of school development plans be carried out with a view to arriving at an agreed standard format; and (e) that a working group to review arrangements for staff development and appraisal be established.

### **3. 5 - 14 Development Programme**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the progress of the 5 - 14 Development Programme within North Ayrshire Schools.

The 5 - 14 Development Programme was first introduced by the Scottish Office in 1987 and has had a major impact on the work of primary and secondary schools across Scotland. Its aim is to ensure that work done in schools is appropriate to pupils' needs. It covers a wide range of subject areas which schools are required to implement. In North Ayrshire, primary schools have identified environmental studies, expressive arts and religious and moral education as the key areas for development. Secondary schools are implementing the programme within subject areas. In North Ayrshire, secondary schools are using the national 5 - 14 guidelines to review programmes for classes at S1 and S2. Schools require time to become familiar with all the guidelines and their implications and there is an ongoing programme of training for staff. Parental links have been encouraged in North Ayrshire Schools and parents have been involved directly in finding out about the 5 - 14 curriculum.

There is a need to take forward developments in the first two years of secondary school, in order to build on the achievements in primaries. Future developments include the setting up of a review group to devise a North Ayrshire format for reporting 5 - 14; drawing up a timetable for implementation; and setting out a 5 - 14 strategic plan for support to schools.

The Committee (a) noted progress to date and (b) approved the further developments as detailed in the report.

### **4. National Testing in Secondary Schools**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on current developments in relation to national testing in secondary schools.

National testing is an integral part of the 5 - 14 Development Programme. The Minister for Education has recently criticised the implementation of national testing in secondary schools and indicated his intention to seek legislative powers to regulate such testing.

In primary schools national testing is now operating satisfactorily, as following strenuous opposition the government had revised its position so that class teachers could make the decision on when to test pupils, parents would be informed of their own child's development, and no league tables of results would be published. The rate of implementation in secondary schools has been slower, for a variety of reasons and there is serious concern that the introduction of a legislative requirement in this case will lead to a repeat of the widespread disruption experienced previously in the primary sector.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to urge the government to reconsider its intention to introduce legislation in relation to national testing in secondary schools; and (b) to seek the support of Members of Parliament and other local authorities in opposing the introduction of legislation.

## **5. Nursery Education Initiative**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on progress on the implementation of the Nursery Education Initiative.

Meetings with the Scottish Office and Capita are continuing. The Scottish Office Helpline has been set up and parents in North Ayrshire with a child in the their pre-school year have received an application form for nursery vouchers. A series of public meetings has been held throughout North Ayrshire which have been successful and extremely well attended. The Evaluation Group is continuing to meet with the intention of rigorously monitoring all aspects of the initiative and has proposed that a representative of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council be invited to join the Group. An agreement has been reached with the Ayrshire Child Care Information Service which is funded by Enterprise Ayrshire, that they should provide an information service and helpline for parents in North Ayrshire regarding child care and nursery provision available. A special meeting has been held in Arran to consult with the voluntary sector and the Early Years Advisor is continuing to visit all establishments where new provision is planned. Registration for nursery places is currently underway.

Nursery developments are now proposed in Skelmorlie and Arran, with 20 part-time places at Skelmorlie Primary School and 20 part-time places at Corrie Primary School, Arran. A peripatetic nursery nurse service is also proposed for Arran in Kilmory, Shiskine and Pirnmill Primary Schools. Investigations are continuing in a small number of additional areas including Castlepark, Irvine, to ascertain the possibility of providing nursery education there and further reports on these potential developments will be submitted to the Committee in due course.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to note the progress made in implementing the Nursery Education Initiative; (b) to approve the proposed development of nursery provision in Skelmorlie and Arran; (c) to approve the involvement of the Scottish Parent Teacher Council in the evaluation of the initiative; (d) that a further meeting be held with the voluntary sector in Arran.

## **6. Modern Languages in the Primary School**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on recent and future developments in modern languages in the primary school.

Pilot projects in the teaching of modern languages in the primary school have been ongoing over a number of years, funded by the Scottish Office Education and Industry Department. In North Ayrshire, seven schools clusters have been participating in these pilot projects and a proposal has been submitted to SOEID for the inclusion of the remaining clusters of Auchenhavrie Academy, Kilwinning Academy and Ardrossan Academy in the next development phase. For timetabling reasons, the language teaching at primary level has been restricted to French. A number of developments are proposed for future years, however, which would include expanding the number of languages taught, refresher training for primary staff who have completed SOEID training, application for EU Lingua Funding to provide a residence opportunity for trained primary staff during a school holiday period and the training of additional staff to replace staff who move on to other posts.

Members acknowledged the desire to expand the range of languages taught. It was noted that an extra curricular Spanish class had been developed at St. Anthony's Primary School, Saltcoats, with assistance in the form of funding the training of a teacher. It was also acknowledged that given the Council's links with Karmoy in Norway, Norwegian might be an appropriate language for development. The Director of Education confirmed that the Advisory Service had identified a module in Norwegian and were hoping to develop this for next year.

The Committee (a) noted the current position in the teaching of modern languages in the primary school; and (b) approved the proposed developments as detailed in the report.

## **7. Transport of School Children: 1996/97 Special School and Medical Contracts**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on tenders received in respect of school transport for children with special needs and for children with medical conditions.

The Committee agreed (a) that the contracts be awarded as detailed in Appendix 1 annexed to the report, including (i) three contracts being awarded to firms who submitted multiple bids which were the cheapest overall; and (ii) one contract being awarded to the firm whose offer was equal lowest with other contractors; and (b) that the nine contracts which require to be re-advertised be awarded and reported to the Committee in due course.

## **8. Award of School Transport Contracts**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on tenders received in respect of school transport contracts.

The Education Committee on 5 March 1996 agreed to continue to utilise the services of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport (formerly Passenger Transport Executive) for the purpose of securing mainstream school transport. Tenders have been received and analysed and it is recommended that contracts be awarded to the lowest tenderer with the exception of ten contracts where it is recommended that the award be made to a contractor who did not submit the lowest tender, on the basis of the lowest tenderer having insufficient resources. A further two contracts are recommended for award to contractors on the basis of combining a school contract and a local bus service. The contracts for Arran and a number of other contracts are not due for renewal until October. On the basis of the recommendations and the anticipated costs of the further contracts still to be renewed, the total cost of school transport for 1996/97 is estimated at £1.466 million, which represents a projected overspend of £250,000. It is recommended that this be reviewed mid-way through the financial year as part of the global view of the Council's revenue budget.

Mr Heaney of SPT expanded on the reasons for the increase in costs. He gave assurances that he was satisfied that in the cases where the lowest tenderer was not recommended, these particular companies did not have sufficient resources.

Members also acknowledged that in relation to the overall cost of the contracts North Ayrshire Council's school transport policy was more generous than the statutory requirement.

After discussion the Committee approved the awarding of contracts, as detailed in Appendices 1 and 4 annexed to the report.

## **9. Spier's Trust**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on procedures for the administration of the Spier's Trust.

Under the Educational Endowments (Strathclyde Region) Transfer Scheme Order 1996 the Spier's Trust Scheme 1978 has been amended to specify North Ayrshire Council as the governing body of the Spier's Trust. The terms of the Trust have not been altered. The Trust therefore will continue to provide grants to persons from the parishes of Beith, Dalry, Dunlop, Kilbirnie, Lochwinnoch and Neilston.

The Committee (a) approved the procedures for the administration of the Spier's Trust; (b) nominated the five local members for the Garnock Valley to serve on the Trust Committee; (c) agreed to seek one representative each from the Dalry, Kilbirnie and Beith Community Councils to serve on the Trust Committee; and (d) delegated to the Trust Committee the authority to determine all applications for grants and any other matters relevant to the administration of the Trust.

## **10. Ayrshire Educational Trust**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on Representation on the Ayrshire Educational Trust.

The Ayrshire Education Trust provides financial support to residents of Ayrshire to pursue courses of further education. East Ayrshire Council has been identified as lead authority in the administration of the Trust and has requested North Ayrshire Council to consider the nomination of five representatives to that Trust.

The Committee agreed to nominate Councillors Dewar, David Munn, Highet, Steven and Oldfather to serve on the Ayrshire Educational Trust.

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

Submitted report by the Director of Education on additional representation on the Appeals Committees from members of local attendance councils.

The Committee on 5 March 1996 approved the procedures in relation to the establishment, composition and operation of Appeals Committees. The composition of the Committees includes members of Local Attendance Councils. A number of names of members of Local Attendance Councils now require to be added to the list previously approved, to take account of updated information.

The Committee approved the inclusion of additional members of Local Attendance Councils, a list of which had been previously circulated, to the membership lists from which Appeal Committee members are chosen.

## **12. North Ayrshire Cup**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on arrangements for the final of the North Ayrshire Cup Schools Football Competition.

The final will take place on 4 June 1996 at 7.15 p.m. in Winton Park, Ardrossan. The Convenor will present the trophy and all members of the Council will be invited to attend the final and the presentation ceremony.

Noted.

## **13. Environment Week 1996**

On 16 April 1996 the Committee agreed to hold three competitions for schools designed to promote Environment Week 1996. Submitted report by the Director of Education on the winners of two of these competitions viz the Debating and Art Competitions.

The Debate was held on 20 May 1996 and the results of the competition were as follows:-

First	Greenwood Academy (Colin Lamb, Louisa Duncan)
Second	St. Andrew's Academy (Sarah Kytzia, Ciara Howie)
Third	Ardrossan Academy (Chris Aitken, Gordon Fraser).

An individual speaker's prize was awarded to Yvonne Wark from Garnock Academy.

The results of the Environment Week Art Competition on the theme "Landscapes of North Ayrshire" were as follows:-

Overall winner	Ryan Storrie, Ardrossan Academy
Nursery	Kris Hart, Moor Nursery, Irvine
Primary 1 to 3	Amanda Seaman, Dreghorn Primary School
Primary 4 to 7	Lisa Dougan, St. John's Primary School
Secondary 1 to 3	Siobhan Dailly, Auchenhavrie Academy
Secondary 4 to 6	Rita Henderson, Ardrossan Academy
Special School	Matthew Cherry, Stanecastle School, Irvine

Entries for the environmental improvement competition are currently being assessed and the results will be reported to the Committee in due course.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the results of the competition; and (b) to congratulate the young people who took part.

#### **14. Conference: Education and a Scottish Parliament**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on attendance at a conference "Education and a Scottish Parliament" to be held in Stirling from 13 to 14 June 1996.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Chair, the Vice-Chairs and the Director of Education or their nominees to attend.

#### **15. Urgent Items**

The Chair had agreed that the following item be considered as a matter of urgency.

#### **16. Appeal Committees: Composition and Training**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the proposed enlargement of the panel of North Ayrshire members to serve on Appeal Committees.

Since 1 April 1996 a number of Education Appeal Committees have been convened to deal with appeals to North Ayrshire Council in relation to decisions on placing requests, exclusions and underage admissions. It has become evident that it would greatly facilitate the administration of these Committees if North Ayrshire Council's Panel of members was enlarged to include members who do not sit on the Education Committee. This would provide more flexibility both in securing the requisite services of members given the fixed period within which appeals must be heard and in terms of chairing the Appeal Committee meetings, as Schedule A 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 stipulates that a person who is a member of the Education Committee of the Council cannot chair Appeal Committee meetings.

The Committee agreed (a) to remit to the Corporate Strategy Committee to nominate additional members of the Council (outwith the Education Committee) to serve on Education Appeal Committees; and (b) to authorise the implementation of training for those directly involved with the work of Appeal Committees.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.