

Education Committee  
6 October 1998

**Irvine, 6 October 1998** - At a Meeting of the Education Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

Thomas Morris, Thomas Barr, Patrick Browne, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Father Matthew McManus, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Robert Rae, Gordon Smith and Reverend John Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive; The Director of Education; B. Gardner, Head of Education Resources; J. Leckie and L. Owens, Heads of Education Services; H. Johnstone, Senior Adviser; M. McLarty, Head of Education Resource Services; I. McKenzie, Acting Learning Support Network Co-ordinator (Education); L. Morton, Assistant Principal Officer (Financial Services); and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr Morris in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Margaret Highet, Thomas Dickie, David O'Neill and George Steven.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 25 August 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Additional Funding for Higher Still**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on additional funding for the Higher Still Programme.

The Government has announced that an extra £24.25m will be made available to schools and FE colleges in Scotland over the period up to 2001/2002, to assist local authorities in ensuring that all secondary school staff are equipped to delivery Higher Still units and courses. The 1998/99 funds will be allocated by formulae related to secondary teacher numbers and the additional resources will be reflected in a redetermination of the settlement effected through the Local Government Finance Order in early 1999. The maximum amount available to North Ayrshire under the formulae is £84,778. Each authority is required to submit details of how the extra funding will be used and it is proposed therefore that the Higher Still Co-ordinating Group draw up plans for submission to the Scottish Office and report to the Committee. Relevant expenditure will include class cover to allow additional preparation time, short term secondment of specialist teachers to assist in staff preparation, local reprographic costs for Higher Still materials, supplementing IT resources and providing continuing support to teachers during the introduction of further levels of courses.

The Committee agreed that the Higher Still Co-ordinating Group submit a report to the Committee recommending how the additional resources be used.

### **3. Pre-Five Voluntary Sector Grants 1998/99**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on grants to voluntary sector Playgroups providing Pre-Five Services.

On 21 April 1998, the Committee (a) awarded grants of £13,050 to voluntary organisations supporting pre-five provision; and (b) agreed that a further report be submitted detailing the proposed use of the balance of £21,782 in the form of grants to voluntary sector groups providing for pre-five children with special educational needs and to voluntary sector playgroups providing nursery education places for three year olds. All registered playgroups were subsequently invited to apply for grant support for three year olds.

Additional funding has since been allocated by the Government as part of the national Childcare Strategy for Scotland. The Council has been allocated £113,560 in total. On 13 September 1998, the Corporate Strategy Committee in approving the allocation of this sum to various projects which would assist in the development of a local Childcare Strategy, agreed that £25,560 be allocated to support voluntary sector playgroups providing for three year olds. The total budget available is therefore £47,342. An interim grant of £4,000 was previously awarded to Parkhouse Playgroup, a voluntary sector playgroup providing for children with special educational needs and it is proposed that a further grant of £4,000 be awarded to this playgroup. It is proposed that the remaining grant funding be equitably distributed among the eligible playgroups in North Ayrshire on the basis of the number of children registered and the number of sessions provided. It was noted that this arrangement will be for one year only and will be replaced by the proposed Government funding provision for three year olds.

The Committee agreed to approve the award of grant to voluntary sector playgroups as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

### **4. Raising Standards: Target Setting for 5-14 Attainment**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on developments in the Target Setting Initiative.

On 25 August 1998, the Committee considered a progress report on implementing the Government's strategy for raising standards through target setting and agreed that further reports be submitted on this initiative. Further advice on 5-14 targets has now been issued by the SOEID. Five to fourteen guidelines set out minimum levels of performance which should be achieved by most children at identified stages. If these levels are considered together in numerical terms, in a school where pupils' attainment is in line with the levels set out in the 5-14 guidelines, a school attainment level of 80% would be derived. On this basis, 80% is to be treated as a national benchmark for attainment under the 5-14 programme and is considered to be the minimum level of performance acceptable nationally. Each school is expected to consider its present level of performance and seek to achieve or surpass that level. Schools should set a percentage attainment target for the year 2001. HMI Audit Unit will provide supplementary benchmark information to assist schools by making comparisons with the attainment level of schools within the same range of free school meal entitlement. The framework is designed to ensure a consistent approach across Scotland.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that further reports be submitted as the implementation of target setting proceeds.

### **5. Learning Support Network**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the progress of the Learning Support Network following its restructuring.

On 5 August 1997, the Committee agreed (a) to approve a reorganisation of both the structure and method of deployment of specialist learning support staff; and (b) that a progress

report be submitted following the first full school session of implementing the new arrangements. The main aims of the restructuring were (i) to slim down the external management of learning support network teachers and maximise resources in schools; (ii) to place greater emphasis on head teachers in managing learning support provision in their own schools; (iii) to introduce a fair and balanced audit system for the distribution of limited support resources across all schools; and (iv) to bring together all forms of central learning support provision within a single coherent management structure.

Since then a number of steps have been taken to implement the proposals including (i) all learning support staff, general and specialist being combined within a single network structure; (ii) an adviser and Network Co-ordinator being responsible for the entire team, instead of as previously an Adviser and three Area Co-ordinators; and (iii) an audit approach in the annual distribution of learning support staff based on school roll, footwear and clothing grant levels and the number of individual children with demonstrable levels of specific and extensive support requirements.

In general, there is satisfaction within schools on the changes which have been introduced. Any concerns expressed will be addressed.

Noted.

## **6. The Education Resource Service**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on progress on the work of the Education Resource Service during academic session 1997/98.

The effective development of Greenwood Teachers' Centre as a training facility was identified as a key issue in 1997. The outcome has resulted in increased utilisation of the centre with income targets for 1997/98 being exceeded and the centre operating at virtually full capacity. The centre is a valuable resource for teacher training and also provides central resource services to schools. Future developments include the possible development of the role of librarians, in the light of a CoSLA report which has been commissioned to recommend standards for school library services in Scotland and the development of performance indicators for school librarians.

Noted.

## **7. Strathclyde Passenger Transport Agency Agreement**

Submitted report by the Director of Education seeking approval for the School Transport Working Group to consider an Agency Agreement being drawn up by Strathclyde Passenger Transport.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport act on behalf of the Council to arrange for the provision of school transport by (i) assessing the level of transport required; (ii) advertising and progressing tendering procedures; (iii) analysing and reporting tenders; and (iv) monitoring and payments of contracts. Under the present arrangement, SPT undertake these duties for a fee, based on the number of contracts and the disaggregated budget of the former Strathclyde Regional Council. An additional fee is paid in respect of Arran, which falls outwith the SPT area.

SPT is now seeking to change the charging structure by introducing an agency agreement to outline the services to be provided by SPT and to charge Councils on an emerging cost basis. SPT deal with mainstream transport only. The Education Directorate arranges special needs transport and vehicle checks on this transport, although the possibility of buying in this service from SPT could be examined. A School Transport Working Group has already been established and it is proposed that the draft agency agreement be considered by this group in this first instance.

After discussion the Committee agreed to remit to the School Transport Working Group to

consider the draft agency agreement with SPT and report.

### **8. Supported Study Initiatives**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Supported Study Initiatives being implemented in schools as a result of the New Deal Funding for Education.

On 10 March 1998, the Committee agreed to approve the allocation of New Deal funding towards various initiatives including supported study programmes. Head teachers of all schools were requested to consider how they might implement supported study initiatives within their schools. A large number of innovative schemes were submitted by schools, which were checked against the criteria for the programme. An important dimension of the initiative will be the evaluation of each programme, in order that good practice can be identified and developed in all schools. There will, however, be financial implications in any proposals to expand the programme in the future. The participating schools and the various programmes of supported study which they are undertaking were detailed in the report.

Noted.

### **9. Kilwinning: Education Provision**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a consultative document proposing amendments to the catchment areas of Abbey Primary School and Whitehirst Park Primary School, Kilwinning as a result of placing requests and new expanding housing developments. The consultation paper has been prepared on both schools proposing amendments to meet the established trends and providing an opportunity to create a better distribution of pupils between the two schools. A second consultation paper has also been prepared addressing the catchment area difficulties at St. Luke's and St. Winning's Primary Schools which have come to light and seeking to establish a clear pattern of provision for denominational education in Kilwinning. The consultation documents will be issued to all interested parties.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the issue of the consultative document; and (b) that a report on the outcome of the consultations be submitted to a future meeting.

### **10. Irvine: Castlepark Nursery**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the naming of the new Nursery located in Castlepark, Irvine.

On 25 August 1998, the Committee agreed to approve a consultation exercise on the name for the new nursery in Castlepark, Irvine. Following the consultation exercise, the name receiving the largest support was Castlepark Community Nursery.

The Committee agreed to approve the naming of the new nursery as Castlepark Community Nursery.

### **11. Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages: Consultation Response**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Council's proposed response to the Scottish Consultative Council who are seeking views on the latest update to the draft document "Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages". Comments on the document are invited by 30 October 1998.

The revised edition of the document takes account of a variety of initiatives and documents previously advised to the Committee and was circulated to all appropriate parties.

A proposed response has been prepared agreeing to the principles and structures contained

within the document with the exception of two matters.

It is considered that the proposal to amend the title of “environmental studies” curriculum area to “science, technology and society” is inappropriate and the “subject combinations” issue could be improved by offering an implementation strategy or structure. On the principle that breadth, balance, coherence, continuity and progression should be sustained through S5/6, it is considered that whilst there is support for coherence and continuity, the reference to the “specialised nature” of the courses pursued and the removal of the requirements to have all modes represented in a students’ curriculum suggest that breadth and balance are less important factors in S5/6.

The Committee agreed to approve the Council's response to the consultation, as detailed in the report.

## **12. School Exclusions 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the degree and pattern of the use of school exclusion in North Ayrshire schools.

On 28 January 1997, the Committee agreed (a) to approve a new policy for the use of exclusions in schools; and (b) that annual reports be submitted on the levels of exclusions. The data for primary schools indicates that the Council is below the national average and exclusion rates in 1997/98 have fallen still further. In secondary schools, there has been an encouraging reduction in the overall level of exclusions and it is clear that the difference between the number of pupils excluded and the number of individual exclusions indicates that there is a much smaller number of children being excluded repeatedly. This is being addressed by the introduction of Education Support Bases in each secondary school as approved by the Committee on 25 August 1998.

The reasons for the reductions generally in exclusions are a combination of several factors, including schools making significant attempts themselves to reduce overall levels, the provision of accurate data and comparisons over the last two sessions and the introduction of the new exclusion policy at the start of the 1997/98 session, whereby schools can negotiate with parents to avoid exclusion. A balance still requires to be maintained between reducing the number of exclusions and maintaining discipline in schools.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Education continue to monitor and review with Head teachers the use of exclusion.

## **13. Support for School Exchanges**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on school exchanges under the Government's New Deal for Schools.

On 2 June 1998, the Committee approved the allocation of additional financial support to facilitate wider participation in school exchanges. To date, seven applications from existing and new exchanges have been received and it is proposed that each be allocated £750 towards travel and subsistence costs. Some schools have not applied for assistance, as they may only exchange every second year. Schools can also apply to the Ayrshire Educational Trust for assistance.

The Committee agreed to approve the allocation of funding of £750 each to the schools listed in the report.

#### **14. Continuing Professional Development: Consultation Response**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Council's response to the Scottish Office Discussion Paper "Proposals for Developing a Framework for Continuing Professional Development for the Teaching Profession in Scotland".

The consultation paper supports the Government's aim in Scotland of improving teacher training, through the creation of a framework for the professional development of teachers at all stages. A response has been prepared, broadly welcoming the attempt to bring a structure and framework to the provision of professional development for staff at all levels in all sectors, as the present arrangements for continuing professional development are considered to be unsystematic. Such a framework should include induction, probation, and additional qualifying courses.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the Council's response to the consultation as detailed in the report.

#### **15. Administration of Medicines**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on issues arising from the present arrangements for the provision of medical treatment and support for children within schools in North Ayrshire.

On 25 August 1998, the Committee arising from the discussion on the response to the SOEID consultation paper on Special Educational Needs in Scotland agreed that a report be submitted on the general arrangements for the support of ill children in schools, with special reference to the problem of children with allergies. Education authorities have a general duty to secure adequate and efficient provision of education. The Council interprets its responsibilities widely in this area and the Education Directorate provides a number of services including (i) transport to and from school for children whose medical condition prevents independent travel; (ii) escorted transport for children who require practical assistance; (iii) home tuition for long term ill children; and (iv) hospital education for children in paediatric wards. Current legislation indicates, however, that the provision of medical supervision and treatment of all pupils in attendance at any school is the responsibility of the Health Board. Against the legislative background, formal guidance has been issued to all schools on the approach to be adopted by staff, which stressed that whilst staff are not required statutorily to be involved in the administration of medicines, their voluntary co-operation can assist in dealing with problems of chronically ill children. This would include action required to deal with allergies. At all times, however, the ultimate responsibility lies with the School Health Service, which may provide training and advice for school staff or, in some circumstances, the direct intervention of parents and/or medical staff.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Director of Education should (i) continue to discuss the relevant issues with Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, with a view to producing an agreed protocol of mutual responsibility; and (ii) raise the issues with the Scottish Office with a view to establishing clear national guidance; and (b) that a report on progress on these issues be submitted in due course.

#### **16. Dreghorn Primary School: HMI Report**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the findings of Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools following an inspection at Dreghorn Primary School in May 1998 as part of a national sample of primary education.

The report commended numerous aspects of provision, provided details of the main recommendations identified in the inspection report, and detailed proposals made to address the key points for action which the inspection had raised.

The Committee agreed to approve these proposals.

## **17. Care and Welfare Inspections**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on a new inspection requirement being introduced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate.

Currently inspections look at all aspects of the work of schools with particular emphasis on curricular provision. On 23 June 1998, the Government announced that a new model of inspection focusing on the care and welfare of pupils in primary, secondary and special schools, would be introduced during session 1998/99. These inspections, which will not be announced in advance, will evaluate schools' arrangements for the care and welfare of their pupils, as well as commenting on the ethos in these schools.

The Committee agreed that reports on care and welfare inspections carried out in North Ayrshire schools be submitted as appropriate.

## **18 National Poetry Day Launch**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the launch of National Poetry Day on Arran.

National Poetry Day will be held on 8 October 1998. Macmillan Children's Books has a historical family connection to Arran and they have indicated that they would wish to launch the event on Arran in 1998. They intend to provide each school age child on Arran with a copy of "Read Me", which is a compilation of children's favourite poems. They will also provide every school on the mainland of North Ayrshire with ten copies of the book. It is proposed to arrange pupils activities prior to 8 October 1998, which will be highlighted on the launch day, including a book of selected poems being presented under the theme "Read Me - Poems by children from the Island of Arran". It is further proposed to arrange an event to publicise the donation of the "Read Me" book to schools on the mainland.

The Committee agreed to approve the arrangements for the involvement of North Ayrshire Schools in the launch of National Poetry Day 1998.

## **19. Triennial Review of Services for Children Under Eight**

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the Triennial Review of Services for Children under the age of 8 years.

On 25 August 1998, the Committee agreed to approve the proposed consultation arrangements in connection with the Triennial Review of Services for children under eight. The draft documents were subsequently issued to various interested parties including members, pre-five establishments, primary and special schools, NHS Trusts etc. A consultation meeting was also held on 17 September 1998. The points raised during the consultation process have been taken into account in the final review document.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposed final version of the Review of Services for children under eight; and (b) that the review now be submitted to the Scottish Office.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.