

Education Committee
16 April 1996

Irvine, 16 April 1996 - 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, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, Samuel Gooding, Peter McNamara, David Munn, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, Robert Rae, Gordon Smith, George Steven.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Director of Education, the Heads of Education Services, a Principal Officer Accounting and Budgeting (Mr Nibloe) and an Administration Officer (Mrs Bale).

Chair

Mr Morris in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Irene Oldfather, Father Mathew McManus, John Sillars and Reverend John Taylor.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 5 March 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Membership of Education Committee

Submitted report by the Director of Education on nominations received for a third Church representative.

Three nominations were received:-

<u>Name</u>	<u>Nominating Body</u>
Mrs Evelyn Sillars	Presbytery of Ardrossan
Mr Tom Marshall	South Beach Baptist Church
Mrs Agnes McLaughlin	Cornerstone Church

The Committee agreed to appoint Mrs Evelyn Sillars.

3. Policy Review Groups

Submitted report by the Director of Education on progress to date in the policy review process and seeking nomination of members to serve on identified policy review groups.

The Committee (a) noted progress to date in the policy review process; (b) agreed that the review group on European Initiatives and on Equal Opportunities be dealt with at this stage by the Corporate Strategy Committee; and (c) nominated (i) Mr Donn and Mr McNamara to serve on the Admissions to Schools Policy Review Group; and (ii) Mr Barr and Mr Browne to serve on the Exclusions from School Policy Review Group.

4. Nursery Admissions Policy

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the establishment of a policy on admissions to all nursery provision within North Ayrshire.

The current admissions policy which was operated by Strathclyde Regional Council recognised priorities amongst applicants and used these to allocate places on the basis of individual need. The policy was considered by many parents to be actively disadvantageous to children in their pre school year who were not considered a priority in terms of the bandings which were applied. A second area of concern was the broad interpretation which could be applied to band three. These concerns have been taken into consideration in the bandings which are proposed, which recognise the need to meet the requirements of children in their pre school year while still addressing individual priorities. The allocation of places will continue to be administered by Heads of Establishment in the context of the multi-disciplinary admissions panels which currently exist.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to approve the new Nursery Admissions Policy; (b) that implementation plans be put into place for the 1996/97 intake; (c) that a review of the effectiveness of the policy be completed by February 1997; and (d) to receive a further report on this review.

5. Security in Schools

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the issue of security in schools.

Over the last few years, the issue of security in schools has been an area of particular concern and the events at Dunblane Primary School in March 1996 have highlighted this. Several measures have previously been taken to combat intrusion into schools during the school day. In introducing any system to improve school security, a balance has to be maintained between welcoming persons and parents on legitimate business to schools and ensuring safe and secure premises.

The Committee acknowledged the need to undertake an initial survey of facilities as quickly as possible, to draw up a prioritised programme of action and to identify what resources will be required to meet their programme.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the setting up of a Security Assessment Group; (b) to nominate Mr Dewar, Mr Munro and Mr Smith to serve on this group; and (c) to approve the initiation of a survey of facilities and procedures.

6. Environment Week 1996

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposals for Education Directorate involvement in Environment Week 1996.

It is proposed that schools involvement in Environment Week should be organised around competitions designed to involve the maximum number of schools and individual pupils. The three competitions proposed are a debating competition, an art competition on the theme "Landscapes of North Ayrshire" and an environmental improvement competition on the theme "School Grounds as a Learning Environment".

The Committee agreed to approve these proposals.

7. Educational and Cultural Links with Karmoy and York

Submitted report by the Director of Education on proposed educational and cultural links with Karmoy and York.

Through the development of the Viking Festival in Largs, links were established by Cunninghame District Council over the last two years with the town of Karmoy in Norway and with Houlgate village in York. Subsequent discussions have taken place on formalising, maintaining and developing these links. A number of possible educational links are now being investigated, including a North Ayrshire school choir and instrumental group participating in the Karmoy festival in June 1996. A number of the educational links may attract external funding.

The Committee agreed to support the establishment of educational links with Karmoy and York.

8. Partnership with Parents

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the outcome of the consultation process on the Partnership with Parents proposals.

Subsequent to the issue of the consultation paper, meetings were held in Arran on 26 February 1996, and Irvine on 4 March 1996. These were targeted at school board and parent representatives and allowed further discussion of the outline proposals. The public meetings were well attended and generated a significant number of comments. From the comments received, it was possible to identify some proposals which enjoy widespread support, including the introduction of a parent

representative to the Education Committee, the establishment of a North Ayrshire School Boards Forum and the idea of intermediate sized cluster meetings which served a smaller area. There was no single strong view on what the cluster boundaries should be, nor on the method of selecting an Education Committee representative.

In order to progress matters, therefore, it is proposed that the cluster groupings be based on three geographical areas:-

(a) Arran; (b) Largs/Three Towns; and (c) Irvine/Kilwinning/Garnock Valley.

Special schools, in addition to being involved in the above clusters, should also have the benefit of a further dedicated special school cluster meeting. In order to select an Education Committee representative, each of the four clusters would nominate members to form a small Executive Committee and this Committee would then nominate one of its members to become the parent representative on the Education Committee.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the introduction of a structure of meetings to allow parents appropriate forums for information exchange and consultation with the Education Directorate; (b) to approve the proposed method of selection and support of a parent representative on the Education Committee; (c) to approve the plan to implement the proposals; and (d) to review the effectiveness of the proposed arrangements in the summer term of 1997.

9. Joint Working Arrangements

Submitted report by the Director of Education on joint working arrangements in respect of the delivery of the Education Resource Service, Technician Service, Careers Service and Hearing Impairment Service.

In order to achieve continuity of service, it is proposed that joint working arrangements be established whereby the disaggregated resources available to each new Council be combined to maintain existing operational arrangements. It is further proposed that a Management Committee, comprising a member of the Education Directorate from each of the three new Councils in Ayrshire, be established to oversee the management of the joint working arrangements for each service. Each Council would contribute a subscription towards the operating costs of the joint venture.

The Head of Educational Resources indicated that he would be examining any improvements required to the services and that this would include training and on-going development of staff.

The host/co-ordinating authority proposed for each service, based on geographical location of the service headquarters is as follows:-

Education Resource Service

North Ayrshire Council

Technician Service

East Ayrshire Council

Careers Service

East Ayrshire Council

Hearing Impairment Service

East Ayrshire Council.

After discussion the Committee agreed to approve the joint working arrangements detailed in the report.

10. Irvine Academy Health Initiative

Submitted report by the Director of Education on an innovative pilot health project linking the Education Directorate, Irvine Royal Academy and Ayrshire and Arran Health Board.

The pilot project is planned to run during the 1996/97 school session and is intended to provide a health exercise facility within the Physical Education Department of Irvine Royal Academy. To this would be referred, via the four Irvine Medical General Practices, adult patients who are not ill but whose inactivity is thought to be threatening their overall health.

The Head of Education Services advised that these patients who did not normally participate in exercise would attend for a programme of sessions over ten weeks, following which they would be given information on the range of exercise facilities available including those in the Magnum Leisure Centre. Agreement has been reached with the Directorate of Community and Recreational Services that patients participating in the referral scheme would be offered discounts for themselves and a friend at Irvine leisure facilities. This would encourage the patients to continue their activities beyond the ten week direct input.

Funding for the pilot project would be made available by Ayrshire and Arran Health Board, including funding for new fitness equipment for the school and an additional part-time member of staff for the Physical Education Department for the duration of the pilot.

The Committee agreed after discussion (a) to approve the terms of the pilot project including, in the light of previous discussion on security in schools, the addition of the provision for identification of adults coming into the school in connection with the project; (b) to authorise the Director of Education to contribute to the monitoring of the project; and (c) to receive an evaluation report.

11. Grants to Voluntary Organisations: Additional Application

Submitted report by the Director of Education on an additional application for grant assistance from the National Trust for Scotland (Culzean Country Park).

The Committee approved a grant of £520.00.

12. Nursery Education Initiative

Submitted report by the Director of Education on progress in relation to the implementation of the Nursery Education Initiative in North Ayrshire.

Consideration is being given to existing local authority provision in order that some areas are not overloaded with extra places. Schools which have been identified as having suitable available accommodation have been visited by Heads of Service and arrangements made to cost necessary refurbishments. Meetings have been arranged with the Scottish Office and Capita, the management group which has been commissioned by the government to manage the distribution of the nursery vouchers. An evaluation group has been set up and a series of public meetings are currently being arranged throughout North Ayrshire. Mrs Elaine MacLean, Head Teacher of Hayocks Primary School, which was awarded a certificate of excellence for being a finalist in the former Strathclyde Regional Council's quality awards, has been appointed to the seconded post of Adviser Early Years with the principal responsibilities of the post relating to the implementation and evaluation of the initiative.

It is proposed that nursery classes will open in August 1996 in a number of primary schools throughout the District under the management of the Head Teacher.

Recognising the lack of spare primary school accommodation in certain areas, it is proposed to initiate two innovative developments in Kilwinning and Fairlie, utilising alternative accommodation, in which nursery class provision will be managed on an outreach basis by the Head Teachers of local primary schools.

Developments in Skelmorlie and Arran have still to be confirmed but should provide a further 50 part-time places.

It is now estimated that the new developments will result in a total of around 630 new part-time places in August 1996. It is anticipated that the provision will be funded entirely from nursery voucher income.

The Committee acknowledged the need to identify all underlying cost of provision when undertaking the evaluation of the pilot project.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposed development of nursery classes throughout North Ayrshire; (b) to approve the arrangements currently being made for a series of public meetings; (c) to note the steps taken to implement the Committee's previous decisions; and (d) that the Director of Education considers Annick Community Centre as possible accommodation for provision in the Girdle Toll area.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.

