

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **EDUCATION COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 22 April 2010 at 4.00 pm.

Present: Councillors PETER NIELD, MARGARET THOMSON, ALISON ANDREWS, MAIRI EVANS, GLENNIS MIDDLETON, JEAN LEE, PETER MURPHY, COLIN BROWN, DONALD MORRISON, ROB MURRAY, BOB MYLES, JOHN RYMER, MARK SALMOND, PAUL VALENTINE and SHEENA WELSH.

Church Representative: Mr BILL SIMPSON.

Teacher Representatives: Mr PHILIP JACKSON and Mr BRIAN McHARDY.

Councillor NIELD, Convener, in the Chair.

1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Iain Gaul, David Lumgair and David May, with Councillors Glennis Middleton, Peter Murphy and Colin Brown substituting respectively. Apologies for absence were also intimated on behalf of Mr David Adams and Mrs Patricia Millar.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Committee agreed to note that no declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES

(a) Previous Meeting

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 4 March 2010](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(b) Special Meeting

The [minute of special meeting of this Committee of 17 February 2010](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

(c) Angus Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

The [minute of meeting of the Angus Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers of 10 February 2010](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX I**).

(d) School Attendance Sub-Committee

The [minute of meeting of the School Attendance Sub-Committee of 23 February 2010](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX II**).

(e) Staffing Sub-Committee

The [minute of meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee of 4 March 2010](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX III**).

(f) Special Cases Sub-Committee

The [minute of meeting of the Special Cases Sub-Committee of 18 March 2010](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX IV**).

4. EXCEPTIONAL CLOSURE DAYS: ISLA PRIMARY SCHOOL

There was submitted [Report No 314/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education advising members of the current progress in respect of the completion of the new Isla Primary School and seeking approval for two exceptional pupil closure days, subject to Scottish Government consent.

The Report indicated that construction of the new school was well advanced and it was expected that the school would be completed in summer 2010. This would enable equipment and resources to be transferred to the school during the summer holidays and staff would then be able to set up classroom resources and undertake the necessary preparatory work.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note that the new Isla Primary School would be completed by Summer 2010; and
- (iii) to approve the closure of the school on Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 August 2010, subject to Scottish Government consent.

5. SOUTHESK PRIMARY SCHOOL BUILDING WORKS

With the reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of the Resources and Central Services Committee of 1 December 2005, there was submitted [Report No 315/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education advising members on the progress of the Southesk Primary School Building Works.

The Report indicated that the school roll had increased during the current year and it was expected that the roll would continue to be relatively high over the next few years. The projected roll for 2010/2011 was 215 and, whilst the total roll was below 222, due to the configuration of pupil numbers, in 2009/10 eight rooms had been used for classes leaving only one available GP room. The pressure on accommodation would be exacerbated in 2010/11, given a relatively large P1 intake and the commitment to reduce class sizes. In order to address the accommodation challenges a number of options had been identified, namely do nothing, improve the former dining hall/gymnasium or a permanent extension.

Improvements to the former dining hall/gymnasium had been identified as the preferred option as this was a cost effective solution which would ensure that all pupils in the school benefited from the investment. It also provided an opportunity to review the situation in the medium term to take account of any reduction in the school roll and the outcomes of a wider review of primary school accommodation/catchment access with Montrose and the surrounding area.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the improvements to the former dining hall/gymnasium as the preferred option.

6. ADMISSION TO PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

There was submitted [Report No 316/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education outlining proposals for significant amendments to the current procedures for admitting children to pre-school.

The Report indicated that following extensive national discussions in late 2009 regarding key aspects of the 2010/2011 financial settlement for local authorities, a flexible package had been agreed to assist local authorities to take forward key education aspirations framed within the Concordat. That agreement reflected a recognition on all sides that, while the Concordat had been developed and agreed in one set of financial circumstances, local authorities were now being expected to deliver its key ambitions in a much more difficult financial climate.

The flexibility that had been agreed around education commitments within the Concordat meant that, in exchange for an undertaking by all local authorities to achieve in the coming session a revised target of 20% of P1-P3 pupils being educated in class sizes of 18 or lower, the Scottish Government would amend its expectations in relation to the expansion of free school meal provision and enhanced pupil entitlements to free pre-school education. Councils would now be able to meet the Government's Concordat commitment by making arrangements for all three year olds in their ante-pre-school year to access pre-school education from their third birthday.

The arrangements to introduce more flexible and more frequent pre-school intakes would require to be managed with regard to the capacity of individual establishments, pupil preparation and induction procedures, and the staffing implications of additional enrolments at each new intake date. Every effort would be made to ensure that children were allocated a place in a nursery class in the school serving the delineated area in which they resided, or in an Angus Council partner voluntary or private setting. The nine intake dates, as detailed in the Report, would make a significant contribution to the Council's ambitions to ensure that all Angus children experienced a sure and confident start to their formal education.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the proposed amendments to current pre-school admission arrangements, with effect from 13 September 2010;
- (iii) to note that the amendments would take account of negotiations around Concordat education commitments within the context of the 2010/2011 local government financial settlement.

7. EXTENDED SUPPORT FOR PUPILS

There was submitted [Report No 317/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education advising members of the current commitments to improve Extended Support for Pupils.

The Report indicated that the Education and Social Work and Health Departments had been working to improve specialist provision for young people for whom a full-time educational placement in school had become increasingly challenging. This provision, formerly known as 'off-site', was now known as Extended Support for Pupils.

A recent HMIE inspection had highlighted the strengths of the Angus extended support service, as well as several major areas for improvement. It was anticipated that the establishment of a strategy group to oversee the work of the extended support service would result in the provision of better quality outcomes for young people with major behavioural challenges.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to note the arrangements in place to review and improve the existing provision for troubled and troublesome pupils.

8. ATTENDANCE DEFAULT GUIDELINES

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 26 November 2009, there was submitted [Report No 318/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education advising members of the revised Attendance Default Procedures.

The Report indicated that the purpose of the review had been to improve the management of attendance across Angus and ensure the adoption of a consistent and effective approach by all schools and support services. The review had been completed and the revised procedures, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report, would replace, with immediate effect the previous guidance issued in November 2008. It was hoped that the revised procedures would support the efforts of Angus schools and support services to improve the attendance of a small but significant number of pupils who failed to attend school on a regular basis and whose capacity to achieve their potential was thereby diminished.

Having heard a number of members welcome the Report, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the terms of the revised procedures, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report; and
- (iii) to instruct the Acting Director of Education to bring forward a Report providing further detailed information on pupil exclusions.

9. ACCREDITED WORK-RELATED LEARNING

There was submitted [Report 319/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education which provided members with an update on progress in taking forward accredited work-related learning in Angus.

The Report indicated that the Scottish Government had clearly indicated its expectations with regard to the development of skills for learning, life and work and specifically the provision of access to accredited work-related learning, which expectations were being well addressed in Angus.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to note the arrangements in place to support this key national initiative.

10. EARLY YEARS DEVELOPMENT – THE POTENTIAL OF SNACK AS A CONTEXT FOR LEARNING

There was submitted [Report No 320/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education advising members of the work being carried out in Angus pre-school settings to exploit the potential of snack as a context for learning.

The Report indicated that a recent audit of pre-school snack provision highlighted a practical opportunity to broaden and deepen children's learning experiences by exploiting the potential of snack as a rich context for learning. Staff had been encouraged to draw up an action plan for their setting to show how they hoped to develop snack as a way of nurturing and extending children's learning. An authority action plan had been produced in order to promote core experiences for all children and related expectations across all Angus pre-school settings.

The Report concluded that children learned best when they were engaged in relevant, stimulating and challenging activities and the project clearly maximised the potential of a learning context with which almost all children engaged on a daily basis. Arrangements were in hand to train a small number of pre-school staff to undertake an accredited qualification in outdoor learning with a view to supporting all early years staff to be confident in the use of snack as a key learning context.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the scope and impact of work currently being undertaken in pre-school settings to use snack as a valuable context for learning; and
- (iii) to note the future developments now planned.

11. SEEMIS GROUP – FUTURE LEGAL STRUCTURE

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 12 January 2006, there was submitted [Report No 321/10](#) by the Acting Director of Education outlining proposals to amend the legal structure of SEEMIS to a Limited Liability Partnership.

The Report indicated that in 1997, twelve local authorities had entered into a Joint Agency Agreement to form SEEMIS in order to provide information technology solutions to support electronic administration within Headquarters and establishments. In recognition of the high customer satisfaction levels and capacity of SEEMIS to deliver an effective Management Information System for the Scottish education environment, there had been a significant increase in local authority membership of SEEMIS. Due to the increased membership, the increasing range of service developments within SEEMIS and the evolving education environment, a consortium/unincorporated association was no longer the most appropriate legal structure for SEEMIS.

A review of the Joint Agency Agreement with South Lanarkshire Council had demonstrated that the agreement could no longer adequately address the risk management issues faced by member Councils and the current legal structure of SEEMIS was unclear. Dundas and Wilson had been engaged by South Lanarkshire Council to undertake an appraisal of options likely to provide a more appropriate future legal structure for SEEMIS and it had been recommended that a Limited Liability Partnership would offer the most effective legal framework.

Having heard from the Convener, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the ongoing discussions with the current 28 member authorities regarding the proposed change to the legal structure of SEEMIS;
- (iii) to approve, in principle, the establishment of a Limited Liability Partnership which included Angus Council as a partner;
- (iv) to approve the establishment of a Sub-Committee with delegated powers to instruct the appropriate officers to negotiate the Members' Agreement of the Limited Liability Partnership, the membership of which to be the Convener and Vice Convener, and Councillors Valentine and Welsh; and
- (v) to note that, on completion of the Agreement, a member of Angus Council and an officer would be appointed to the Board on a rotational basis.