

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **EDUCATION COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Thursday 24 January 2008 at 4.00 pm.

Present: Councillors PETER NIELD, MARGARET THOMSON, ALISON ANDREWS, MAIRI EVANS, IAIN GAUL, DAVID LUMGAIR, DAVID MAY, DONALD MORRISON, ROBERT MYLES, JOHN RYMER, MARK SALMOND, PAUL VALENTINE and SHEENA WELSH.

Church Representatives: Mr DAVID ADAMS and Mrs PATRICIA MILLAR.

Teacher Representatives: Mr PHILIP JACKSON and Mr BRIAN McHARDY.

Councillor NIELD, Convener, in the Chair.

Prior to commencement of the business, the Convener drew the attention of members to the consultation document issued by Murdo Fraser, MSP on the proposed Rural Schools (Scotland) Bill. He advised that the Director of Education would be submitting a draft response to the next meeting of this Committee and any member who sought to have views reflected in this draft response was encouraged to submit these to the Director of Education within the next three weeks.

1. **APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr Bill Simpson and Councillors Rob Murray and Helen Oswald with Councillor Ralph Palmer substituting for Helen Oswald.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Morrison declared an interest in item 5 following contact made to him by a local community group, but indicated that he would take part in any discussion and voting thereon.

3. **MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 29 November 2007](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

Performance Management Reporting (Article 10 refers)

Arising therefrom, and having heard Councillor May, members congratulated all staff concerned for their outstanding contribution in the areas of the Middle Years Information System and Coaching Programmes.

4. **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS 2007/2008**

There was submitted [Joint Report No 73/08](#) by the Director of Education and the Director of Corporate Services advising members of the Service Level Agreements currently in place between the Education Department and third party providers in 2007/2008.

The Report indicated that the Department had a significant number of Service Level Agreements with voluntary sector providers in addition to two major contracts for the provision of cleaning and catering in schools with Tayside Contracts. These Agreements ensured the provision of a range of essential education services throughout Angus and partnership working and was an essential aspect of delivery of best value services by the Education Department.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to note the ongoing commitment by the Education Department to partnership working with voluntary sector service providers; and

- (iii) to note the summary of Service Legal Agreements currently in place, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the Report.

5. INVERBROTHOCK PRIMARY SCHOOLHOUSE SURPLUS TO REQUIREMENTS

With reference to Article 45 of the minute of meeting of the Resources and Central Services Committee of 19 June 2003, there was submitted [Joint Report No 74/08](#) by the Director of Education and the Director of Corporate Services recommending that the former Janitor's house at Inverbrothock Primary School be declared surplus to educational requirements and disposed of.

The Report indicated that the schoolhouse had been vacant since early 2007 and the works currently planned to improve the school would ensure that all the needs of the school would be met from within the main building.

The Convener indicated that a community group had expressed an interest in the building and it was proposed, therefore, that if the community group could put a funding package in place to purchase the property at market value, then they should be given an opportunity to do so. Accordingly, it was recommended that the Director of Corporate Services should be authorised to negotiate the sale to the group and if no agreement could be reached by Summer 2008 then the property be sold on the open market.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to declare the former janitor's house at Inverbrothock Primary School as surplus to educational requirements; and
- (iii) to authorise the Director of Corporate Services to negotiate the sale of the site and buildings to a local Community Group, subject to the group submitting a funding package to purchase the property at market value and that the building be sold on the open market should no agreement be reached with the Community Group by Summer 2008.

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING: ESTABLISHMENT OF WORKING GROUP

There was submitted [Report No 75/08](#) by the Director of Education advising members that a staff working group had been established to identify ways in which further support might be provided to improve the health and wellbeing of staff.

The Report reminded members that the Council was committed to the Healthy Working Lives agenda and all schools were encouraged to participate in this programme.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

With reference to Article 4 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 11 January 2007, there was submitted [Report No 76/08](#) by the Director of Education advising members of a recently published Departmental Communications Strategy within the Education Department.

The Report indicated that efforts had been made to identify more clearly where shortfalls existed in the current communications networks and in seeking to identify any gaps, emphasis had been placed on the need for every member of staff to feel totally involved.

The Committee agreed to note the terms of the Communications Strategy, as appended to the Report, but noted also that the Director of Education would consult further on apparent inconsistencies between paragraphs 2.10 and 3.4.5.

8. BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

There was submitted [Report No 77/08](#) by the Director of Education advising members of reported incidents of bullying in schools and to a range of preventative approaches which were being put in place.

The Report indicated that all schools had been asked to record and submit records of every bullying incident and the Report detailed the number of incidents which had taken place in primary and secondary schools in 2006/2007, which represented an increase over the numbers reported in 2005/2006.

All schools took the subject of bullying very seriously and efforts to combat this and to adopt effective preventative approaches with pupils, staff and parents, were continuing. Each school in Angus had adopted a whole-school approach to bullying which was relevant to its needs.

Having heard Councillor Morrison, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to note the range of preventative approaches which were being put in place to combat bullying in schools.

9. BRECHIN HIGH SCHOOL - VOCATIONAL LEARNING CENTRE

With reference to Article 6 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 11 January 2007, there was submitted [Report No 78/08](#) by the Director of Education detailing progress which had been made in developing a Vocational Learning Centre at Brechin High School and outlining the next steps to develop this facility.

The Report indicated that, as an interim position, an area had been provided at Brechin High School which enabled pupils to follow constructions skills courses without having to attend Angus College, ensuring a minimal disruption to other learning.

It was now proposed, in partnership with Angus College, to provide a Vocational Learning Centre at Brechin High School which would initially offer construction, care and ICT courses, which will also be made available to pupils from Montrose Academy and other schools throughout Angus.

Having heard Councillors Evans, May and Welsh who commended this excellent initiative and the Convener who stressed that this was not an alternative to behavioural support, but a genuine options choice for S3 pupils, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the development of a Vocational Learning Centre at Brechin High School;
- (ii) to note that it was hoped to complete the proposed works by Autumn 2008; and
- (iii) to authorise the Director of Education, in consultation with the Director of Corporate Services, to finalise arrangements with Angus College regarding an appropriate Service Level Agreement.

10. MONIFIETH HIGH SCHOOL - EXTENSION (PHASE 2)

With reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 19 June 2007, there was submitted [Report No 79/08](#) by the Director of Education outlining progress in providing an extension at Monifieth High School to meet the requirements of the school, particularly as a result of reductions in class sizes in English and Mathematics in S1 and S2.

The Report indicated that the proposed extension provided an excellent opportunity to improve the learning and teaching environment in the school and would overcome a number of issues which were highlighted as requiring attention in the recent HMle Report which had commented adversely on some aspects of the school's accommodation, particularly the lack of confidential meeting and social spaces for pupils.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to authorise a small extension to be added to Monifieth High School, as detailed at paragraph 4.2 of the Report.

11. AWARD OF SCHOOL CONVEYANCE CONTRACTS

With reference to Article 14 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 19 June 2007, there was submitted [Joint Report No 80/08](#) by the Director of Education and the Director of Infrastructure Services detailing the results of tendering for school conveyance contracts which had been awarded since the major re-tendering exercises were undertaken, for the start of the new academic session in August 2008.

The Committee agreed to note the award of contracts by the Director of Education in terms of Section 16.12(b) and Appendix 2 of the Financial Regulations in respect of Contracts Numbers XSP/2, ASD/4, ASP/23, ASP/53, ASP/54 and ASP/55.

12. POST OF ASSISTANT PSYCHOLOGIST

There was submitted [Report No 81/08](#) by the Director of Education seeking approval to establish a post of Assistant Psychologist on a temporary basis.

The Report indicated that the Education Service in Angus had been operating significantly below its agreed complement of Educational Psychologists and the appointment of a newly qualified Educational Psychologist, while providing a welcome addition, would still leave the service with a shortfall of 1.2 full-time equivalent posts.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the establishment of a post of Assistant Psychologist on a temporary basis on a fixed term contract of 23 months, with the salary level to be evaluated using the job evaluation framework.

13. LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: "WE CAN AND MUST DO BETTER" FUNDING TO SUPPORT STRENGTHENING THE CORPORATE PARENT FUNCTION

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of the Social Work and Health Committee of 10 January 2008, there was submitted [Joint Report No 40/08](#) by the Director of Social Work and Health and the Director of Education advising members that the Scottish Government had provided the Council with one-off funding of £42,000 to be spent within the current financial year, to raise and sustain awareness of the Council's responsibility as a corporate parent for looked after children.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to note that the Director of Social Work and Health and the Director of Education would submit a Corporate Parent Strategy to the Social Work and Health Committee and to this Committee for final authorisation, in due course.