

## ANGUS COUNCIL

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

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

**Church Representatives:** Mr DAVID ADAMS, Mrs PATRICIA MILLAR and Mr BILL SIMPSON.

**Teacher Representatives:** Mr PHILIP JACKSON and Mr BRIAN McHARDY.

Councillor NIELD, Convener, in the Chair.

*Prior to commencement of the business, the Convener welcomed to the meeting Mrs Susan Duff, who had recently been appointed to the post of Senior Education Manager.*

*He also paid tribute to Mr Jan Nowak who was retiring from the post of Senior Education Manager in May 2008 and made reference to Mr Nowak's distinguished career in education as a teacher and a head teacher prior to joining the Education management team of Angus Council in 1996. Members expressed thanks and good wishes to Mr Nowak on his retirement.*

### 1. APOLOGIES/SUBSTITUTES

There were no apologies intimated.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Salmond declared an interest in item 13(b) as a trustee of Montrose Y.M.C.A. and because his daughter was a regular user of the facilities within the premises.

He indicated that he would not participate in discussions or vote on any question arising from this item.

A number of members declared that they had received emails in connection with the proposed closure of Eassie Primary School. They indicated that they had offered no comment on the content of the emails and therefore proposed to take part in the discussion and voting on the Report by the Director of Education.

### 3. DEPUTATION - EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL

The Committee agreed, in accordance with Standing Order 12, to hear a deputation from Eassie Primary School Parent Council on the subject of the future of Eassie Primary School.

On behalf of the deputation, Mr B Pattullo and Mr G Durston, member and Chairman respectively, of the School Parent Council addressed the meeting and asked members to consider fuller details of the situation before proceeding to consultation on a proposal to close Eassie Primary School as recommended in [Report No 391/08](#) by the Director of Education.

They advised that in their view, Report No 391/08 was not balanced and that there was no educational argument for closure of the school. They urged members to consider the following:-

- the previous report relating to the future of Eassie was less than three years ago and the issue was again causing concerns for parents and pupils;
- the village hall, which currently was unable to accommodate pupils from Eassie for physical education classes, was being replaced and would be available next year;
- Eassie Primary School roll would rise with new housing development in the area;

- the School had recently received an exemplary report from H.M.I.E. which was higher than national standards;
- the catchment area of Eassie might be expanded to include part of the Glamis Primary School area which would relieve pressure on Glamis; and
- the Council could lose GAE funding of approximately £219,000 per annum if Eassie was to close.

In conclusion the members of the deputation intimated that Committee members should take a long term view and protect rural schools as far as possible.

Following questions, the members of the deputation were thanked for their attendance and withdrew to the public benches.

#### 4. MINUTES

##### (a) Previous Meeting

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 6 March 2008](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

##### (b) School Attendance Sub-Committee

The [minute of meeting of the School Attendance Sub-Committee of 5 March 2008](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX I**).

##### (c) Staffing Sub-Committee

The [minute of meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee of 6 March 2008](#), a copy of which is appended hereto, was submitted and noted (**APPENDIX II**).

#### 5. SCHOOL TERMS AND HOLIDAYS 2009/2010 – PROPOSALS FOR CONSULTATION

With reference to Article 14(b) of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 February 2007, there was submitted [Report No 369/08](#) by the Director of Education, inviting members to consider the basis of a consultation exercise on school term and holiday dates for session 2009/2010.

The Report proposed that a consultation exercise be authorised inviting comments from all Parent Councils, all trade unions recognised by the Council and from individual members of staff. It was also proposed that the Director of Education be authorised to share the proposed dates with the Directors of Education of neighbouring Councils as part of the ongoing deliberations on harmonisation.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to authorise a consultation exercise on the draft schedule of school term and holiday dates for school session 2009/2010, as detailed in the appendix to the Report.

#### 6. BARRY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND WELLBRAE PRIMARY SCHOOL – DISPOSAL OF BUILDINGS

With reference to Article 3 of the minute of meeting of Angus Council of 29 September 2005, there was submitted [Joint Report No 388/08](#) by the Director of Education and the Director of Corporate Services recommending that the former Barry Primary and Wellbrae Primary School buildings be declared surplus to educational requirements.

The Report indicated that following implementation of the Forfar/Carnoustie schools project, these buildings were no longer required for educational purposes, nor were there any proposals to make educational use of them in the future.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to declare the former Barry Primary School and Wellbrae Primary School buildings surplus to educational requirements; and
- (iii) to recommend to the Corporate Services Committee that the Director of Corporate Services be instructed to dispose of the buildings on the open market.

## **7. THE PRINCE'S TRUST**

With reference to Article 15 of the minute of meeting of the Strategic Policy Committee of 28 October 2003, there was submitted [Report No 389/08](#) by the Director of Education alerting members to recent amendments to the Prince's Trust funding.

The Report indicated that the Council had a long standing association with the Trust and, following the support formally expressed by the Council in 2003, two main strands had been developed, namely xl clubs and the Team Programme.

The xl clubs had gradually extended during the past five years and currently there were twelve operating in five Angus secondary schools.

The Team Programme operated over a twelve week period and was intended for young people aged 16-25, the majority of whom were unemployed.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the allocation of £8,000 to enable two Prince's Trust Team Programmes to proceed in 2008/2009 with funding coming from the contingency for unidentified burdens set aside within the 2008/2009 revenue budget.

## **8. REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION**

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 February 2005, there was submitted [Report No 390/08](#) by the Director of Education drawing attention to the current pattern of primary school provision across Angus and to the condition of school buildings.

The Report indicated that investment levels in rural primary schools throughout Angus had been high during the past twelve years and the merger of some schools over that period had reduced the over-capacity which would otherwise have been unsustainable.

The work of improving the school estate was ongoing and it was essential that reasonable levels of investment should continue. In the event of the Scottish Government launching its Scottish Futures Trust within the next few months, the Council should be in a position to take advantage of this, or any other major government funding initiatives.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

## **9. EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 11 August 2005, there was submitted [Report No 391/08](#) by the Director of Education drawing attention to the nature of the school accommodation in Eassie Primary School and asking the Committee to recommend to the Council that a formal consultation be undertaken with parents on the possibility of closing the school.

The Report indicated that the physical accommodation in the school building was significantly poorer than was available in Newtyle Primary School which was 3.7 miles from Eassie and highlighted the following points:-

- Eassie was unable to deliver a full curriculum from its own premises due to the lack of facilities for physical education;
- the current school roll of 14 pupils was an exceptionally small peer group for most pupils;
- it was unlikely that Eassie would be given priority for any major capital expenditure and consequently, pupils would require to be educated in a less than ideal physical environment;
- in the 2007 census, three of the year groups had one pupil in it; and
- Eassie was one of only two primary schools in Angus without a dedicated nursery provision.

Councillor Nield, seconded by Councillor Thomson, moved that the Committee agree:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to recommend to the Council:-
  - to authorise a formal consultation exercise on a proposal that:-
 

Eassie Primary School should close, with pupils transferring to Newtyle Primary School and the delineated area of Eassie Primary School should merge with the delineated area of Newtyle Primary School to form the new delineated area of the merged school.
  - to instruct the Director of Education to report back on the outcomes of the consultation exercise to the next ordinary meeting of this Committee and to a special meeting of the Council both on 5 June 2008.

COUNCILLOR GAUL, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR WELSH, MOVED AS AN AMENDMENT, THAT NO ACTION BE TAKEN ON THIS ISSUE AND THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD NOT PROCEED TO FORMAL CONSULTATION ON A PROPOSAL TO CLOSE EASSIE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

On a vote being taken, members voted:-

For the motion:

Councillors Nield, Thomson, Andrews, Lumgair, May, Myles, Rymer and Salmond (8).

For the amendment:

Councillors Evans, Gaul, Morrison, Murray, Oswald, Valentine and Welsh and Mrs Millar, Mr Simpson, Mr Jackson and Mr McHardy (11).

No vote:

Mr Adams (1).

The amendment was declared carried and the Committee agreed to recommend to the Council accordingly.

## 10. REVIEW OF CURRENT ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT CHILDMINDERS IN ANGUS

There was submitted [Report No 392/08](#) by the Director of Education advising members of the service currently provided by the Scottish Childminding Association to support Angus childminders and setting out options for the future delivery and management of this service.

The Report indicated that, since 2003, the Scottish Childminding Association, via a Service Level Agreement, had been commissioned by the Council to support the recruitment and retention of childminders. This Agreement, which was reviewed annually, expired on 1 April 2008 and had been temporarily extended pending consideration of future options.

While the service received to date from the Association had been satisfactory, there were some value for money concerns and in these circumstances, there was a need to review existing arrangements and to consider alternative ways of providing support to childminders in Angus ensuring that these childminders had access to high quality local support and advice.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report;
- (ii) to approve the proposal to discontinue the current Service Level Agreement with the Scottish Childminding Association by the end of June 2008, on the basis detailed in the Report; and
- (iii) to authorise the Director of Education to make the necessary arrangements to establish a part-time Childminding Development Officer post as indicated at Option A of the Report.

#### **11. PROVISION OF CHILDREN'S CARE, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT SVQ STANDARDS IN ANGUS**

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 25 May 2006, there was submitted [Joint Report No 393/08](#) by the Director of Education and the Director of Social Work and Health seeking approval of a proposal to extend the existing two year contract with Angus College for the delivery of SVQ qualifications in Children's Care, Learning and Development.

The Report indicated that the Council was committed to supporting the childcare workforce by ensuring the availability of high quality professional development opportunities for staff. The extension of the SVQ contract with Angus College would ensure that the local childcare and early years workforce had the opportunity to enhance their skills and their professional practice. In addition, the Scottish Social Service Council had recently introduced registration requirements for the childcare and early years workforce and it was vital that childcare staff had access to appropriate professional training.

The Committee, for its interest, agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the extension of the existing SVQ contract with Angus College for a further period of one year to 1 June 2009.

#### **12. INTERNATIONAL VISITS AND EXCHANGES**

With reference to Article 7 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 22 February 2007, there was submitted [Report No 394/08](#) by the Director of Education advising of arrangements made for members of the Education Department to participate in international visits and exchanges.

The Report indicated that Angus schools and the Angus Community Learning and Development Service continued to demonstrate considerable enthusiasm for international work and there were significant linguistic, social and cultural benefits for staff who had the opportunity to be involved in these international visits and exchanges.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to endorse the programme of International Visits and Exchanges, as detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

### 13. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

#### (a) Pitstop, Forfar

With reference to Article 9 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 24 February 2005, there was submitted [Report No 395/08](#) by the Director of Education describing the work undertaken by the Drugs Initiative Group in Forfar to support young people who were placing themselves at risk.

The work was part-funded by a Service Level Agreement with the Council and the Report recommended that the Council should now enter into a further Service Level Agreement with the Group to provide one evening's "open" youth work provision throughout the year. This would enable the provision of one evening's youth work for 48 weeks of the year which would provide initial contact with a wide range of young people and support them to develop personal skills through involvement in activities.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the proposal to enter into a further Service Level Agreement with the Forfar Drugs Initiative Group at a cost of £3,700 per year, for a period of three years.

#### (b) Montrose YMCA

There was submitted [Report No 396/08](#) by the Director of Education recommending renewal of a three year Service Level Agreement with Montrose YMCA to provide one evening of "open" youth work and one evening of "focused" youth work for 48 weeks of the year.

The Report indicated that operation of this Agreement had been evaluated using the evaluation framework with various strengths highlighted and a revised Agreement had been proposed which defined the services to young people which the Montrose YMCA would be required to deliver in return for funding from the Council.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to approve the renewal of a Service Level Agreement with Montrose YMCA for the period 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2011, at a cost of £10,447 per annum to the Council.