

Motherwell, 6 December 2000 at 2 pm.

A Meeting of the **EDUCATION JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE**

PRESENT

Authority Side - Councillor Gray, Convener, and Councillors Curran, Grant, McGhee and G. Murray.

Teachers' Side - W. Cairns; H. Glen ; P. McGowan and H. Campbell as substitute for V. Topping, P. Cullen as substitute for A. Morrice and B. McLean as substitute for W. Brown who was absent at the start of the meeting.

ALSO PRESENT

W. Brown (for items 3-7).

CHAIR

Councillor Gray (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

The Committee Services Officer, Director of Education, Depute Director of Education, Head of Contracts and Provision and Head of Personnel Services.

APOLOGIES

Authority Side - Councillor Barrie
Teachers' Side - A. Morrice and A. Taylor

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

1. There was submitted the Minute of the meeting of the Education Joint Consultative Committee held on 6 September 2000.

The Committee approved the terms of the Minute.

The Convener exercised his discretion to vary the Order of Business as hereinafter minuted.

PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

2. P. Lavery, on behalf of the teachers' side, (1) intimated that whilst they were opposed, in principle, to Public Private Partnership (PPP) they were aware that PPP packages were being developed in other Scottish Local Authorities; (2) sought an update on the authority's plans for the development of an expanded PPP bid, and (3) referred to the PPP bid for the refurbishment of Airdrie Academy and (a) acknowledged the arrangements for the removal of asbestos from the roof space of the main teaching block of the school; (b) expressed concern that a further group of staff had been exposed to asbestos, and (c) requested that the staff be consulted should there be any further developments.

For the authority, the Director of Education advised (1) that although he shared many of the concerns of the teachers' side with regard to PPP it was prudent to look at the merits of PPP for major maintenance works; (2) that, as the Scottish Executive had indicated that it favoured multiple project PPP packages, an Officer Working Group was currently reviewing the condition of primary and

secondary schools in North Lanarkshire and the PPP packages of other authorities with a view to formulating proposals for a multi-project PPP package; (3) that a Member/Officer Working Group would meet early in 2001 to progress any proposals; (4) that every effort had been made (a) to obtain additional funds for urgent remedial works to Airdrie Academy; (b) to ensure that these remedial works would be carried out as soon as possible, and (c) to decant staff and pupils to hutted accommodation during the implementation of the work in the interest of safety, and (5) that although tests had been carried out to assess the risk of exposure to asbestos, the results had been inconclusive and that he was waiting on further clarification on the matter.

The Committee noted the position.

ICT DEVELOPMENT

3. With reference to paragraph 9 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 6 September 2000, P Lavery and W Brown, on behalf of the teachers' side, referred to the programme for ICT development in schools and (1) acknowledged that this was the first year of the programme, but expressed concern at (a) the assumption that principal teachers of computer studies could take responsibility for educational aspects of network management; (b) the lack of internet access points in some secondary schools; (c) inadequate technical support, and (d) problems arising from upgrading machines, and (2) welcomed (a) the production of an NLC Internet User Agreement for staff, and (b) the efforts made to ensure that the deployment of an additional 0.2 FTE per secondary school was solely for network management purposes.

For the authority, the Head of Contracts and Provision (1) emphasised that as the programme was at an early stage and given the nature of the works involved there were still management issues which had to be addressed; (2) intimated that an Officer Working Group had been established to monitor the programme; (3) advised that, on average, each secondary school had been supplied to date with 10 internet access points, and (4) commented on the issue of technical support.

In respect of the point raised in relation to the lack of technical support, the Head of Personnel Services also advised (1) that the remit and salary of the post of Technician was currently being assessed to take account of changes in the operational requirements of the post, and (2) that notwithstanding the current evaluation, the remit and salary of the post would be later reviewed under the Job Evaluation Scheme.

The Committee noted the position.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS INCLUSION

4. P Lavery, for the teachers' side, referred to the terms of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 which required an education authority to provide education in mainstream schools, except under certain specified circumstances and (1) expressed concern at the timescale for the implementation of special educational needs inclusion and at the financial implications arising therefrom; (2) sought information regarding the immediate future of Drumpark School, Coatbridge, Glencryan School, Cumbernauld and Firpark School, Motherwell, and (3) acknowledged the opportunity for informal discussions amongst parents, staff and the Department of Education.

For the authority, the Director of Education commented on the difficulties associated with the presumption to mainstream schooling, the harmonisation of the school day and parental choice.

The Committee noted the position.

ABSENCE COVER

5. With reference to paragraph 8 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 1 February 2000, P Lavery, for the teachers' side, referred to the lack of absence cover for teachers and (1) acknowledged the action taken by the authority in advertising for supply teachers, improving the supply teacher database and in organising open events for student teachers; (2) suggested that an increase in the permanent primary school cover pool and the establishment of a secondary cover pool might alleviate the problem, and (3) welcomed further informal discussions between the Director of Education and the teacher representatives on the need to improve cover supply at the next informal meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee.

For the authority, the Depute Director of Education (1) outlined the difficulties in maintaining adequate supply; (2) indicated that the authority had increased the number of permanent primary pool posts and had investigated the feasibility of setting up a secondary school cover pool; (3) advised that the authority was represented on the Scottish Executive Education Department Working Group and that information regarding the difficulties in obtaining supply cover had been passed by the Working Group to the Scottish Executive to influence an increase in the figures for future college intakes of students and graduates for teacher training, and (4) indicating that the issues had been regularly discussed at informal meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee.

The Committee noted the position.

CABINET STYLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

6. P. Lavery for the teachers' side referred to the proposals in the McIntosh Report for authorities to review their decision making structures and sought an update on the matter, particularly in relation to the Education Committee and the Education JCC Committee, and to the provision for teacher representation.

For the authority, Councillor Gray advised (1) that a report by the Chief Executive which set out the main findings of the review undertaken by the Review Group on Local Government Modernisation had been referred by the Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 5 December 2000 to the Council, which meets on 21 December, 2000, for consideration, and (2) that, in the meantime, it was anticipated that (a) the Education Committee, the Education Joint Consultative Committee and the Education quasi-judicial Committee/Sub-Committees would continue to function; (b) that the Education Resources Sub-Committee might merge with the parent committee, and (c) that provision for teacher representation on the Education Committee and the Education Joint Consultative Committee would continue.

The Committee noted the position.

WORKLOAD

7. P. Lavery for the teachers' side expressed concern at the increase in workload of teachers and, in particular, at (1) the requirement for the preparation of Individual Educational Programmes (IEPs) for children with Records of Needs, and (2) the pressure which could be exerted on teachers by the Standards and Quality Reports produced by the Department.

For the authority, the Director of Education (1) commented on the efforts made by the Department to manage change in education by introducing new material on a phased and co-ordinated basis; (2) advised that there were no plans at the moment to require IEPs for non-recorded children but that the programmes were considered to be in keeping with good practice, and (3) intimated that the

Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 required the authority to support schools which had difficulties and that one of the purposes of the Standard and Quality Reports was to highlight areas of difficulty.

The Committee noted the position.