

Motherwell, 28 February 2001 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. Lavery; P. McGowan; A. Morrice; A. Taylor; V. Topping and B. McLean as substitute for W. Brown.

CHAIR

Councillor Gray (Convener) presided.

IN ATTENDANCE

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

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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

The Committee agreed (1) with reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute relating to "ICT Development" that the word "technical" be substituted for the word "educational", and (2) that the Minute be otherwise approved.

McCRONE IMPLEMENTATION AGREEMENT

2. For the authority, the Director of Education referred to the recent ratification of the national agreement to improve teachers' pay and conditions by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers, and (1) advised that on receipt of notification from COSLA of the pay settlement every effort would be made to secure the early implementation of the relevant salary increases; (2) intimated that the authority was currently looking at the best way to develop a framework to take forward the various elements of the agreement package, particularly (a) the establishment of a local negotiating committee for teachers, and (b) the introduction of a 35 hour week for all teachers commencing 1 August 2001, and (3) suggested that informal discussions on these matters could be arranged.

The Depute Director of Education also advised that a report summarising the agreement and illustrating how the elements might be taken forward by way of an Action Plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Education Committee.

A. Morrice, on behalf of the teachers' side (1) welcomed the agreement and the authority's efforts in securing the early payment of the salary increases; (2) expressed interest in the early progress, at a national level, of the review of the salaries and conditions of service for psychologists and advisers and also for the application of the national formula for music instructors; (3) sought early progress on (a) meetings of the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers being convened, and (b) the development of a local negotiating committee and the determination of recognition rights; (4) advised of their intention to meet with school representatives to brief them on the key issues of the agreement, and (5) requested that a Working Group be set up to formulate guidelines for the introduction of a 35 hour week for teachers and to report thereon to an informal meeting of the JCC Committee.

In response, the Director of Education intimated that in light of the timescales set for the implementation of the various aspects of the agreement and provided that the relevant guidance could be issued to Head Teachers by early April 2001, he had no objection to a Working Group being set up to produce a framework for discussions on issues at a local level.

The Committee noted the position.

EDUCATION BUDGET 2001/2002

- 3. For the authority, the Director of Education referred to the Education Budget for 2001/2002 and commented on the significant increase in the funds available for expenditure.

P. Lavery, on behalf of the teachers' side (1) welcomed (a) the efforts of the authority in protecting the Education Budget over the years; (b) the decision not to review secondary school provision in 2001/2002; (c) the benefits to be derived from the move towards three year budgeting; (d) the opportunity to discuss the budget with the Leader of the Council and the Director of Education, and (2) expressed concern (a) that services, such as the provision of foreign language assistants, which were subject to budget cuts in previous years had not been reinstated, and (b) at reductions in the provision of school cleaning.

In response, the Director of Education advised that, in respect of the budget saving highlighted, there may be the possibility of funds being made available from the Excellence Fund for Schools to provide for the temporary appointment of foreign language assistants.

The Committee noted the position.

ICT DEVELOPMENT AND USERS' AGREEMENT

- 4. With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 6 December 2000, P. Lavery and A. Morrice, on behalf of the teachers' side, referred to the programme for ICT Development in schools (1) intimated that the Users' Agreement was acceptable to the teacher representatives; (2) expressed concern about the time taken to remedy computer system failures and server crashes, and (3) sought an update on the progress of the programme and on the problems encountered during the implementation process.

For the authority, the Head of Contracts and Provision (1) advised that it was anticipated that all educational establishments would be networked by June 2001; (2) commented on the arrangements for the provision of training for teachers; (3) indicated that a contract had been awarded to Scotsys to provide technical support to schools, and (4) intimated that an Officer Working Group had been set up to look at the authority's model for ICT support in comparison to the models of other authorities.

The Committee noted the position.

ABSENCE COVER

- 5. With reference to paragraph 5 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 6 December 2000, P. Lavery, on behalf of the teachers' side (1) reiterated concerns about problems caused by the lack of absence cover for teachers; (2) noted the action taken by the authority to date to alleviate the situation, and (3) requested that further consideration be given to the feasibility of extending the primary school cover pool and setting up a secondary school cover pool.

For the authority, the Depute Director of Education (1) reiterated the difficulties in obtaining teachers for primary school cover; (2) intimated that, in the long-term, the availability of primary school teachers

should improve as it was anticipated that the college intake of students and graduates for teacher training for 2001/2002 would double; (3) indicated that the results of a recent audit of the demand for secondary school teacher cover had shown that a secondary school cover pool would not be viable, and (4) suggested that further consideration be given to the matter following the issue of national guidelines in relation to the recommendations of the McCrone Committee on teachers pay and conditions.

The Committee noted the position.

DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

6. With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 9 February 2000 when it had been agreed that a Working Group comprising representatives of the authority and teachers' side be established to review issues relating to discipline in schools, P. Lavery, on behalf of the teachers' side (1) reiterated concerns at (a) the perception that there was a growth in the number of incidents of indiscipline by pupils, and (b) the pressure on teachers to reduce exclusions, and (2) advised that it was the intention of the EIS to survey members on disciplinary issues, the results of which would be reported to a future informal meeting of the Committee.

For the authority, the Director of Education (1) advised that the Minister for Education had set up a Working Group to review the issues relating to the discipline in schools, and (2) suggested that it might be prudent for the authority to establish a shadow Working Group to review the material from the Ministerial Working Group from a local perspective.

The Committee noted the position.

CONVENERSHIP 2001/2002

7. The Convener intimated that, in accordance with the constitution of the Committee, the next meeting, which was scheduled to take place on 6 June 2001, would be under new convenership.

P. Lavery, on behalf of the teachers' side, thanked the Convener for his services to the Education Joint Consultative Committee during his convenership.

The Committee noted the position.