

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 24 MAY 2005

CONSULTATION ON DRAFT BILL: MAKING THE DIFFERENCE – IMPROVING PARENTS’ INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To inform Members of the Education Committee of the draft proposals issued by the Scottish Executive on Improving Parents’ Involvement in Schools and the authority response to the proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED) issued a consultation document and a draft Bill on Parent’s Involvement in Schools in February 2005. This consultation document proposes that School Boards be removed and replaced by Parent Forums. It is proposed that every school should have a Parent Forum and that the education authority would be responsible for promoting parental involvement in schools. The consultation document also seeks views on the functions and role of the proposed Parent Forums and the role of the education authority in supporting such bodies.
- 2.2** The authority set up a working group consisting of a variety of representatives to draft a response to the proposals. This group has reported in detail on the proposals contained within the consultation document and prepared responses to the 22 questions contained therein. The authority has also consulted with parents by means of specific events held across the authority.

3. CONSULTATION

- 3.1** Consultation events have been held across the authority (in Kilmarnock, Cumnock, Dalmellington) and parent representatives have been involved as presenters during these events. Further, each School Board was requested to send a copy of its response to the authority in order to shape the authority’s response.
- 3.2** The response from the authority has, therefore been based on the responses from the working group and parents. This response is outlined below.

4. RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

4.1 Strategies for Parental Involvement

The authority welcomes the requirement that education authorities promote parental involvement in schools. We also agree that each authority should prepare a Strategy for Parental Involvement, building on the current good practice, and that this should be part of the improvement planning process in schools and the authority.

4.2 Parent Forum and Appointments

East Ayrshire has a functioning School Board in every school, although we recognise that this is not the case in all authorities. If there is to be a more flexible approach to parental representation, then clear guidance will be required at national and local level. There needs to be clear guidance on the size of the new forums, the appointment or election process and there needs to be consistency within each authority and, preferably, nationally. While the proposals to remove the election process would probably encourage more parents to participate, there needs to be a clear and valid mechanism for parental nomination or appointment.

4.3 Role and Functions of the Parent Forum

The constitution of each Parent Forum should not be determined locally. This will lead to significant variation across each authority and certainly on a national basis. This should be determined by the local authority in consultation with parents.

The functions proposed within the draft Bill are appropriate, but there requires to be defined areas of interest in order that the confidentiality of individuals is protected.

There is also a lack of clarity with regard to the attendance of the Head Teachers and Councillors to the Parent Forum. This needs to be clarified and the Head Teacher should have the right to attend, as should the local Councillor. There is also a need to define staff representation and co-opted members, as the current proposals are very unclear in this area.

4.4 Appointments for Head Teachers and Depute Head Teachers

We would wish parental involvement in such appointments to continue. There will need to be clear guidance on how parent representatives are nominated to appointment committees. Such parental representation should be consistent across all authorities in Scotland and should not lead to inconsistencies across authorities.

4.5 Summary

In summary, the proposals contained within the consultation document and the draft Bill are very unclear and inconsistent. They do not provide clear guidance for the replacement of School Boards on a consistent model and could lead to considerable diversity and inconsistencies across the country. Parent representatives were particularly strong in their view that while the current School Board arrangements could be improved, these proposals would not improve matters. We would ask that SEED reconsider the proposals contained in the document.

5. **POLICY/LEGAL/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The outcome of the consultation may lead to a revised Bill on Parental Involvement in Schools. There may then be legal implications in terms of legislation depending on the final outcome of the proposals.

5.2 The financial implications are unclear and will require to be reviewed when any revised Bill is published.

6. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

6.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) note the response to the consultation on Parental Involvement in Schools; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JMcC/JBS
5 May 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Consultation on Draft Bill: Making The Difference – Improving Parents' Involvement In Schools.
- 2, Education Committee Paper – Working With Parents - 9 November 2004

Members requiring further information should contact John McCarney, Head of Service: Schools Support (01563) 576126, or Muriel Reid, Quality Improvement Officer (01563) 555650.

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