

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 6 FEBRUARY 2001**

#### **NATIONAL PRIORITIES IN EDUCATION**

##### **Report by Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1** To seek approval for the use of National Priorities in Education to guide establishment-based and service planning.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Members will recall the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 received the Royal Assent in July 2000. This was followed by a Commencement Order indicating that most of the provisions came in to force on 13 October 2000. Subsequent Guidance Notes have now been issued by the Scottish Executive and these are available in the Members' Library. Committee gave approval to an action plan that had been prepared by the Department of Educational and Social Services.
- 2.2** The new Act requires Scottish Ministers to define national priorities for education. Local authorities are required to take account of these National Priorities in preparing an Authority annual statement of improvement objectives to be published each year starting in December 2001. School development plans, under the terms of the Act, must take account both of the national priorities and the Authority's statement of improvement objectives.

#### **3. NATIONAL PRIORITIES**

- 3.1** In November 2000, the Scottish Executive issued a circular detailing the progress that has been made with the National Priorities. This Circular indicated that the Education (National Priorities)(Scotland) Order 2000 (SSI 2000/) had been made and is subject to affirmative resolution procedure. This report has been prepared on the assumption that the Statutory Instrument will be affirmed by the Scottish Parliament.
- 3.2** The Statutory Instrument is the result of an extensive national consultation to which there were 220 responses. The framework of the Statutory Instrument is focused on outcomes and leaves the means of implementation to Authorities and schools. Authority plans have to specify how the priorities will be implemented in their area.

**3.3** The five national priorities are detailed below:

**Achievement and Attainment:**

To raise standards of educational attainment in all schools, especially in the core skills of literacy and numeracy, and to achieve better levels in national measures of achievement, including examination results.

**Framework for Learning**

To support and develop the skills of teachers, the self discipline of pupils and to enhance school environments so that they are conducive to teaching and learning.

**Inclusion and Equality**

To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages.

**Values and Citizenship**

To work with parents to teach pupils respect for self and one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society.

**Learning for Life**

To equip pupils with the foundation skills, attitudes and expectations necessary to prosper in a changing society and to encourage creativity and ambition.

**3.4** It is envisaged that these priorities will operate for the next 3 to 5 years, thereafter they will be reviewed following consultation. In the near future the Scottish Ministers will publish measures to track performance. These will be the subject of consultation.

**4. THE NATIONAL PRIORITIES IN EAST AYRSHIRE**

**4.1** The new Act specifies that a number of different groups must be involved in planning processes at both school and Authority level. In order to meet the requirements of the law and the established practices within the Authority, it is proposed to mount a consultation exercise involving:

- staff in educational establishments;
- parents, through school boards and authority forums;
- children and young people;
- representatives of the teachers' professional associations; and
- representatives of others with an interest in education

Staff will be consulted mainly using existing arrangements as exemplified by the Joint Consultative Committee structures. The requirements of the Act however require the Authority to specifically consult with staff who are not teachers, but

who are employed in schools. Current arrangements do not precisely conform to this requirement. Discussion will therefore need to take place with the Trade Unions on how best to meet this new condition.

**4.2** Members will also recall that currently the development in schools is guided by a Strategic Plan for the Education Service 2000-2003. Since this strategic plan was produced before the National Priorities it is not surprising that there is not a precise fit between the two sets of documents. A matching exercise has been undertaken by staff of the Department of Educational and Social Services, and although this has determined that the Authority's current plan can make a significant contribution to the National Priorities, this is not true in all cases. In order to make the arrangements workable for schools it is therefore important to review the current Strategic Plan and align it to the National Priorities. Inevitably, this will mean that some targets currently identified for action will require to be postponed. Conversely some new targets may require to be added.

**4.3** The new legal framework has significant implications for how planning progresses in schools. For this reason, the Quality development Team is currently revising the school development planning process and its associated documentation. Once this work has been finalised, following consultation with schools, it will be reported to Committee for formal approval.

## **5. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The advent of National Priorities, together with the associated consultative and planning mechanisms, has considerable implications for the Corporate Planning process and the place of schools within it. Discussions have taken place with the Head of Corporate Planning and Communication in order to ensure that the statutory educational planning processes and the corporate process can be harmonised without unnecessary duplication of effort and loss of effectiveness.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**7.1** It is recommended that Members :

- (i) agree the use of the National Priorities as the basis for planning at Authority and establishment level within the Department of Educational and Social Services;
- (ii) agree that the Director of Educational and Social Services can re-prioritise the existing Strategic Plan for the Education Department to accord with National Priorities;

- (iii) agree that officers of the Department of Educational and Social Services should initiate consultations on how the National Priorities will be delivered at local level;
- (iv) agree to refer this report to the Policy & Resources Committee for consideration;
- (v) request that the Director of Educational and Social Services provide future reports to Committee on how the aspects of provision that are based on this report might be implemented; and
- (vi) otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/DL  
21 January 2001

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. A Strategic plan for the Education Department 2000-2003

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools, (01563-576089).

**Implementation Officer: Graham Short**

**AGENDA**