

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

4 June 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 343/96

CROSS-BOUNDARY NURSERY ENROLMENTS

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of this report is to draw the attention of the Committee to a recent request from Dundee City Council, to obtain approval from the Committee on the terms of a suitable response to this request, and to recommend the adoption of criteria for considering requests for nursery enrolments of children resident outwith Angus.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) authorises me to respond to the enclosed letter from Dundee City Council (Appendix) by indicating that Angus Council does not agree to make an inter-authority payment of the type requested;
- (ii) instructs me to accept any request for enrolment in a nursery school or class from a parent resident outwith Angus only if there are no Angus pupils over the recommended minimum nursery age of 3 years 4 months on the waiting list for the nursery school or class in question;
- (iii) instructs me to monitor closely the pattern of nursery enrolments in Angus, together with pre-school developments across Scotland, including the pilot scheme being introduced by the government on nursery vouchers, and to report back to the Education Committee in due course.

BACKGROUND

Reference is made to the decision of the Education Committee on 27 September 1995 (Article 3 refers). Members will recall the Committee's rejection of the concept of nursery vouchers being promoted by central government, and the Council's decision not to volunteer to participate in the pilot scheme.

I have received the enclosed letter from Mrs Anne Wilson, Director of Education of Dundee City Council (Appendix). Members will note from Mrs Wilson's report to the Dundee City Council Education Committee that parents of pupils resident in Angus but attending Dundee nurseries are likely to be asked to pay £29 per school week for a part-time place with effect from August 1996. This translates to an annual cost of approximately £1,100 which is precisely the value of a pupil nursery voucher

proposed by central government. Whilst the majority of children attending nursery schools and classes do so for one year only, when there were places available within a nursery school/class, it was the practice of Tayside Regional Council to enrol three-year olds who then normally spent two years in that same nursery. The enclosed letter indicates that 10 pupils resident within the boundaries of Angus Council are in this latter category, ie they are currently enrolled as pupils in a nursery school/class managed by Dundee City Council, and would normally have expected to continue in that school/class for a second year in 1996/97. Mrs Wilson's letter relates specifically to these 10 pupils for whom she seeks an inter-authority payment from Angus Council. I now understand that there are in fact 11 Angus children currently enrolled in Dundee nurseries for 1995/96 and expected to remain in these nurseries in 1996/97. Nine of these children are in part-time places, with an inter-authority payment of £1,100 being sought for each, and 2 children are in full-time places with an inter-authority payment of £2,200 being sought for each. In all, to accede to this request would cost the Council £14,300.

Enrolment of Angus Children in Dundee Nurseries

Because of the proximity of Angus to Dundee, it is not surprising that some parents wish a nursery place for their children in a Dundee nursery. For many parents such a placement is convenient in terms of proximity to their places of work and often to members of their extended families. Tayside Regional Council adopted criteria to enable fair and consistent decisions to be taken about applicants for nursery places when the number of applicants exceeded the number of places available. Adoption of these criteria has meant that fewer 3 year old children than 4 year old children are enrolled in nurseries, and fewer children living a significant distance from any nursery are enrolled when compared to those living close to the nursery. However, the provision of nursery places within the boundaries of the new Dundee City Council allows a higher proportion of pre-school children to have access to nursery provision in Dundee than is the case within Angus Council. This in turn makes it more likely that Dundee City Council will have sufficient space available in its nurseries to enable it to offer places to children resident outwith its own boundaries.

From the point of view of the parents of the aforementioned 11 children currently attending nursery schools in Dundee, and not due to commence primary school until August 1997, they are likely to expect their children to continue in their current nursery throughout 1996/97. Those parents residing in Angus and now seeking to enrol their children in a Dundee nursery for the pre-school year will be charged personally by Dundee City Council for this facility. It is hoped that the former group of children will be allowed to continue their nursery education irrespective of any inter-authority payment. Parents of some pupils in the latter group have already made informal approaches to officers of this Council enquiring as to the possibility of Angus Council refunding them for the fees being charged to them by Dundee City Council. Clearly if Angus Council were to meet these requests, the total cost would be even greater than the sum of £14,300 described above.

Enrolment of Children Outwith Angus in Angus Nurseries

The flow of children into Angus nurseries from addresses furth of Angus also exists, although it is less marked. Those nursery classes managed by Angus Council closest to the boundary with Dundee City Council are in Birkhill, Murroes and Seaview Primary Schools. From August 1996, the number of pupils resident outwith the boundaries of Angus Council and seeking places in one of these three nursery

classes is approximately 20. At present it seems likely that, using the prioritisation criteria adopted by Tayside Regional Council, at most 5 of these children from Dundee would be enrolled in one of the aforementioned nursery classes, in addition to possibly a small number of children from Perth and Kinross who live very close to Birkhill. The major difference between these classes and those in Dundee is that demand more significantly outstrips availability in the three Angus nurseries mentioned, and indeed in Angus nursery classes generally. Very few pupils in any of these nurseries is enrolled as a three year old, and in 1995/96, only 19 three year old pupils were enrolled in any of the three nursery classes mentioned, out of a total of 158 enrolments in these three classes. None of these 19 pupils is resident outwith Angus.

The Council would appear to have three broad options open to it in considering requests for nursery placements for children outwith its boundaries:

- a) to accept these requests if there are places available, but to charge parents a pre-determined fee (this is the option which Dundee City Council appears to be pursuing, and it assumes parents would be willing to pay the aforementioned fee);
- b) to treat these requests in exactly the same way as they would have been treated if Tayside Regional Council had continued to be the education authority (this would probably result in a handful of four year olds resident in Dundee or Perth & Kinross obtaining places in Angus nurseries at no charge, when an equal number of children who live in Angus, possibly three year olds, or four year olds living some distance from a nursery class, would not be granted a nursery place); or
- c) to treat these requests in a similar way to (b) above with the exception that, only if there are no Angus pupils over the recommended age of 3 years 4 months seeking a place in a nursery, would a place be offered to a child not normally resident in Angus in that nursery.

None of these options is ideal, but, given the circumstances as they currently stand, option (c) would appear to be the most logical.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The disaggregation of the Revenue Budget for Tayside Regional Council took account of the existing pattern of pre-school provision in the three new Council areas. In particular, no provision was made in the disaggregated budget for Angus to enable it to make any inter-authority payment for nursery pupils.

It could presumably be argued that one of the reasons for the need to re-distribute central government funding for revenue support purposes to assist Dundee City Council was the high cost of pre-school provision being incurred by that Council as a direct result of its very favourable (in relative terms) provision of pre-school places. In other words, one reason for the "mismatch" funding which was re-directed by central government to support Dundee City Council at the expense of Angus Council was the significantly greater proportion of pre-school places available in Dundee as compared to Angus.

COSLA guidance at present is that no inter-authority payments ought to be made for mainstream placements in primary or secondary schools, but that local agreements should continue to pertain for Special Educational Needs pupils. There is no COSLA advice regarding nursery inter-authority payments.

Finally, no provision has been made within the Education Department's Revenue Budget for 1996/97 to enable an inter-authority payment to be made to Dundee City Council for the amount apparently requested, namely £14,300.

In terms of non-Angus children enrolling in Angus nurseries, only option (a) above has any financial implications. The income generated if this option was adopted would be very small, and would depend very much on whether parents were willing to accept a place on a fee-paying basis.

CONCLUSIONS

- (i) Whilst understanding the situation facing Dundee City Council, in all the circumstances I cannot recommend that an inter-authority payment be made of the type requested.
- (ii) Requests for enrolments in a nursery school or class from a parent resident outwith the boundaries of Angus should only be accepted if there are no Angus pupils over the recommended minimum age of 3 years 4 months on the waiting list for the nursery school or class in question.
- (iii) Government proposals for nursery vouchers will, if fully implemented, necessitate a review of all nursery enrolment procedures, and these arrangements should therefore be closely monitored.

CONSULTATION

This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance.

JIM ANDERSON

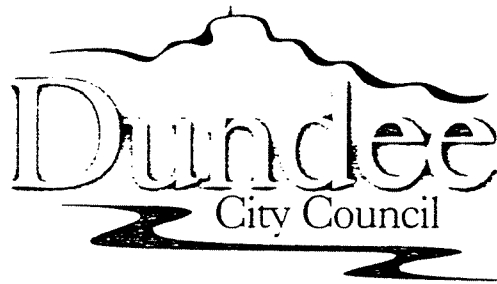
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

APPENDIX

JAA/RB



Education

Mr Jim Anderson
Director of Education
Angus Council
County Buildings
Market Street
FORFAR DD8 3WE

Anne Wilson - Director
Floor 8, Tayside House
Crichton Street, Dundee DD1 3RJ
Tel 01382 223281
Fax 01382 303080

If calling please ask for Frances Browne - 01382 303686
Our Ref 1401/AW/FB/MM Your Ref

Date 23 April 1996

Dear Mr Anderson

The attached report by the Director of Education on Cross-Boundary Enrolment in Nursery Schools and Classes (Report No 8/1996) was approved by Dundee City Council Education Committee on 2 April 1996. I refer you particularly to the section below:

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:
- 2.2 authorise the Director of Education from the beginning of school session 1996/97, after places have been allocated to children residing within Dundee, to offer surplus places to children outwith the City at full cost to their parents;
- 2.3 agree that from session 1996/97 admission to Dundee City Council nursery schools and classes is granted to those children who reside outwith the Dundee City Council boundary who currently attend Dundee City nursery schools or classes and who would be entitled to another year of nursery provision under Tayside Regional Council's guidelines for admission to nursery schools and classes, and that the Director of Education make a formal approach to Angus Council and Perth and Kinross Council to request an inter-authority payment for these places.

You will note that I have been authorised to write to ask formally if Angus Council is prepared to make an inter-authority payment for these ten (10) places in the category referred to in

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23 April 1996

Mr Jim Anderson

Section 2.3. Names and addresses of the children concerned can be made available to you, if you wish.

I await a response at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anne Wilson".

ANNE WILSON
Director of Director of Education

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REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 2 APRIL 1996

REPORT ON: CROSS-BOUNDARY ENROLMENT IN NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CLASSES

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 8/1996

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 In the light of the disaggregation of Tayside Regional Council, this report addresses the question of the enrolment in Dundee City Council nursery schools and classes of children living outwith the boundary of the City of Dundee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

2.2 authorise the Director of Education from the beginning of school session 1996/97, after places have been allocated to children residing within Dundee, to offer surplus places to children residing outwith the City at full cost to their parents.

2.3 agree that for session 1996/97 admission to Dundee City Council nursery schools and classes is granted to those children who reside outwith the Dundee City Council boundary who currently attend Dundee City nursery schools or classes and who would be entitled to another year of nursery provision under Tayside Regional Council's guidelines for admission to nursery schools and classes, and that the Director of Education make a formal approach to Angus Council and Perth & Kinross Council to request an inter-authority payment for these places.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The proposed charge to parents would be £29 per school week for a part-time place (ie either morning or afternoon) and £58 per week for a full-time place. If current applicants from outwith the City took up the Council's offer and Angus Council and Perth & Kinross Council agree to inter-authority payments where appropriate it would generate additional income of approximately £57K to the Council in financial year 1996/97 which has not been included in the Education Revenue Budget.

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 BACKGROUND AND CURRENT SITUATION

6.1 Within the Dundee Area of Tayside Regional Council Education Department, nursery education has been provided in 15 nursery schools, and nursery classes in 23 primary schools.

6.2 Upon disaggregation, the number of nursery schools within Dundee remains at 15, but the number of primary schools offering nursery provision reduces to 20 as a result of the move into Angus of Birkhill, Murroes and Seaview Primary Schools.

6.3 In school session 1995/96, 61 pupils residing outwith the Dundee City boundary have attended a nursery school or class in the City. To date, 43 applications have been received from parents residing outwith Dundee City boundary for their children to attend a Dundee City nursery school or class in session 1996/97. Of these, 15

children are already attending a Dundee City nursery school or class this session, and would be entitled, by reason of their age, to receive another year of nursery education under Tayside Regional Council's guidelines for admission to nursery education.

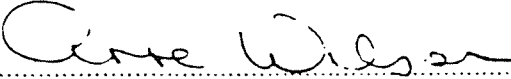
- 6.4 The Directors of Education of Angus and Perth and Kinross Councils have informally indicated that funding to support nursery provision for children living in their areas who wish to receive nursery education in Dundee nursery schools or classes is unlikely to be given by their authorities.

7.0 **STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Any staff reduction would be minimal and can be met from within normal staffing turnover.

8.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.


.....
Director of Education

..... 26/3/96
Date