

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

5 MARCH 2002

A SCIENCE STRATEGY FOR SCOTLAND: ADDITIONAL FUNDING FOR SCIENCE
ACTIVITIES AND RESOURCES

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to seek the Education Committee's approval of proposals to disburse additional funding distributed to Authorities in support of the Science Strategy for Scotland.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report
- (b) notes and approves the proposals to disburse additional funding for Science activities and resources being made available to Angus Council by the Scottish Executive
- (c) notes that the allocation to Angus is £120,800
- (d) notes that the expenditure proposals are in tune with the Angus Science Action Plan which was the subject of a detailed report to the Education Committee on 22 January 2002 (Article 16 refers)

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In August 2001, the Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning, Wendy Alexander, launched "A Science Strategy for Scotland". The main objective of that Strategy of relevance to school education relates to a national commitment "to ensure that enough pupils study Science to a standard and level which enables the future needs of the country to be met".
- 2.2 On 22 January 2002 the Education Committee approved a Science Action Plan drawn up in response to the main recommendations made by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in "Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools 1995-2000 (The Sciences)". That Plan also takes due account of the commitment to resource and improve Science education in Scottish schools enshrined in the Science Strategy for Scotland. The Science Strategy states that "**Science education in schools is an area where the Executive can take a wide range of actions to promote science, and where recent studies indicate that there is still much to be done. Strong support for Science education in schools is more likely to lead to the development of a culture that is comfortable with scientific thinking which encourages young people to pursue science and related subjects. What happens in our schools lies at the heart of making Scotland a scientifically confident society**".
- 2.3 The Science strategy further states that "**science should be taught in a safe modern environment which promotes effective learning. In many schools there has been relatively little investment in science equipment and accommodation in recent years**".
- 2.4 I was advised in a letter from the Scottish Executive of 24 January 2002 that additional funding of £120,800, ring-fenced to science education, was being allocated to Angus Council. This sum is to be directed towards helping schools in addressing the objectives of the National Science Strategy. While there are no absolute restrictions on how this allocation might be spent, there is a clear expectation on the part of the Scottish Executive that the monies will be spent on **resources, accommodation** and

facilities, staffing and staff development. Priority areas for school education identified in the Science Strategy include:

- the preparation of exemplar curriculum materials
- provision of modern resources and accommodation, where possible
- improved continuing professional development for teaching staff

3 EXPENDITURE PROPOSALS

3.1 It is proposed that the additional Science monies be expended in support of the Angus Council Science Action Plan which itself seeks to respond to the priority objectives of the Science Strategy for Scotland.

3.2 There is a significant commitment in place at present to support improvements in relation to 5-14 Science in each school cluster. A major resource issue facing primary schools is the need to secure a range of resources including hardware to enable them to implement the 5-14 Science programme of study which has been developed with a number of other authorities, principal among which is Renfrewshire Council. Another significant resource issue relates to the provision of school-based as well as centre-based staff development activity for significant numbers of staff who may have no specialist background or qualification in Science. The additional funding from the Scottish Executive will, therefore, assist Angus schools to meet 5-14 resource and staff development targets earlier than might otherwise have been the case.

3.3 Given the timing of this allocation, it is far from certain that funds could be disbursed efficiently and effectively in the remainder of this financial year. It is, therefore, proposed that in accordance with the SEED circular the additional resources be distributed to schools, so that, where necessary, funding might be carried forward into the new financial year. The following breakdown is proposed:

- £61,000 allocated on a flat rated basis to enable **all** schools to purchase core resources required to implement the now adopted 5-14 Science Programme of Study
- £24,800 to secondary schools to fund the purchase of priority resources, not least in relation to the replacement of obsolete equipment
- £35,000 to support the production of curricular materials and the provision of school-based as well as centre-based staff development activities in line with the priorities identified in the Angus Council Science Action Plan

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The allocation of £120,800 has been paid as a grant under the Grants for Improvement in School Education (Scotland) Regulations 1998. In accordance with the terms of the Scottish Executive letter of 24 January 2002 the full grant will be distributed to schools in this financial year on the basis set out in 3.3 above.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications arising directly from this report.

6 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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.

NL/AR