

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

30 APRIL 2002

INSPECTION OF THE EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ANGUS COUNCIL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report draws the Committee's attention to the recently published report by HMIE on the Education Functions of Angus Council, and to the requirement on the Council to prepare and publish a follow-up Action Plan.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a notes the contents of the published report on the Education Functions of Angus Council (previously circulated to all members of the Education Committee by the Chief Executive : a further copy is available for perusal in the Members' Lounge);
- b commends the staff of the Education Department for their efforts and congratulates them on the public acknowledgement of these efforts by HMIE;
- c instructs me to lead the process of preparing a follow-up Action Plan for submission to the Education Committee at its June meeting and for publication immediately thereafter.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 16 October 2001 when a letter dated 31 August 2001 from HM Inspectorate of Education was submitted. That letter advised that an Inspection of the Education Functions of Angus Council would take place during the period 12 November 2001 to 18 January 2002.
- 2.2 The Inspection duly took place and some elected members were interviewed by members of the Inspection team as part of that process.
- 2.3 The final report of the Inspection was published on 11 April 2002.

3 EVALUATION

- 3.1 The Inspection process is undertaken within a framework of 11 Quality Indicators, each of which is ranked on a 4-point scale – “very good”, “good”, “fair” and “unsatisfactory”.
- 3.2 In the case of the Inspection of Angus Council, 5 of the Quality Indicators were found to be “very good”, namely:
 - Vision, Values and Aims
 - Effectiveness of Leadership and Management

- Mechanisms for Consultation
- Service Planning
- Financial Management

Six of the QIs were found to be “good”, namely:

- Policy Development
- Mechanisms for Communication
- Deployment and Effectiveness of Staff
- Resource Management
- Measuring, Monitoring and Evaluating Performance
- Continuous Improvement and Performance

There were no aspects in the “fair” category and none in the “unsatisfactory” category.

4 KEY STRENGTHS

4.1 The report highlights 5 key strengths, namely:

- The clarity and impact of vision, values and aims.
- The high quality of leadership and the effectiveness of the Director of Education and senior officers.
- Effective mechanisms for consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.
- Effectiveness of the planning processes and the coherence between plans at Council, Education Service and school level.
- Very good procedures for financial management.

5 MAIN POINTS FOR ACTION

5.1 In common with what is now well-established practice for inspection reports on individual schools, reports on education authorities identify ways in which the education service could be improved.

5.2 In the case of Angus Council, the main points for action are:

- The Education Department should further develop approaches to ensure improvement in educational attainment and achievement especially at 5-14 and the upper stages of secondary education.
- More systematic approaches to data gathering and analysis should be developed to ensure that support for improvement is targeted effectively.
- The roles of link advisers should be developed to contribute in a more focussed way to raising achievement and attainment.
- More systematic arrangements should be introduced for the development and evaluation of policy, particularly in relation to quality assurance and support for pupils with special educational needs.
- The process of policy led budgeting should be further developed to ensure clearer linkages to the budget.

- 5.2 As part of the Inspection process, the Council is now expected to prepare and publish a follow-up Action Plan setting out how it intends to address the main points for action in the report.

6 COMMENTS

- 6.1 The Inspection Team went about its task professionally and thoroughly. The findings can therefore be supported.
- 6.2 In general terms, the report confirms the excellent work which goes on day and daily in our education service here in Angus. It is a tribute to the hard work and dedication of staff and should serve to help further cement the excellent school-community partnerships we have been fostering since Angus Council was first established.
- 6.3 It is pleasing that the report specifically highlights a number of areas of good practice, practice which has evolved as a result of several years of hard work and commitment from a wide range of people. The partnerships which the education service has been trying to develop with young people, parents and communities are positively commended and we have a good foundation on which to build.
- 6.4 I believe that we have a good track record of prudent financial management which has enabled our schools to plan for the future with confidence. It is heartening to read that the Inspectors have commended our attempts to integrate school development planning with service planning across the Council; schools can achieve much more working within a supportive education authority framework than they ever could individually.
- 6.5 As ever, HMIE have highlighted a number of areas for improvement. The identification of these areas by an external body is of enormous potential benefit as part of our commitment to continuous improvement.
- 6.6 The Inspection report also sets the contribution of the education service in the context of Angus Council's corporate responsibilities : Education has a crucial role to play in such issues as Health, Economic Development and Community Safety.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS

- 7.1 There are no human rights implications arising from consideration of this report.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 In accordance with the standing orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.
- 8.2 The Chief Executive has particularly welcomed the fact that the Inspection Report sets the contribution of the education service in the context of the Council's Corporate Strategy and the process of Community Planning, as well as focussing particularly on the effectiveness of the Council in its quality assurance of educational provision and of its support to schools in improving quality.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

Background Paper

Inspection of the Education Functions of Angus Council
HMIE/Accounts Commission – April 2002

JAA/CJ