

ANGUS COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

25 JUNE 2002

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY LEARNING STRATEGY: PROGRESS REPORT

JOINT REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to bring to the Committee's attention progress being made in implementing the Angus Community Learning Strategy. The report also advises the Committee of national developments which will have an impact on community learning and development initiatives in Angus.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report;
- (b) notes the progress made in implementing the Angus Community Learning Strategy not least in relation to the publication of Local Community Plans in all eight Area Forum areas;
- (c) notes key national developments in support of Community Learning and Development initiatives including the production of Community Learning Plans.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Reference is made to Reports 344/00 and 970/00 considered by the Committee on 21 March 2000 and 5 September 2000 respectively.
- 2.2** Report 344/00 described the arrangements made to finalise the Angus Community Learning Strategy. Report 970/00 advised the Committee of the favourable evaluation of the Angus Community Learning Strategy by the Scottish Executive Education Department.
- 2.3** A key commitment within the Community Learning Strategy related to the production of eight local Community Learning Plans in each of the eight Angus Area Forum areas.

3 PRODUCTION OF LOCAL COMMUNITY LEARNING PLANS

- 3.1** The development of a local community learning plan was first undertaken in Angus in Arbroath. A local community learning planning group comprising local representatives of community groups and community learning and development providers, including specific Angus Council services, collaborated in the development of a framework for local Community Learning Plans.
- 3.2** The Arbroath Community Learning Plan was produced in June 2001. The remaining Area Forum areas have now also produced local plans which used the framework initially devised within the Arbroath partnership.
- 3.3** The attached summary - drawn up in accordance with the principles and key themes of the Angus Community Plan - provides an overview of the Community Learning and Development priorities identified within the eight Angus Local Community Learning Plans.

4 THE ANGUS LITERACY AND NUMERACY ACTION PLAN

- 4.1** Community Learning Strategy Partnerships are seen by the Scottish Executive and Lifelong Learning Department as the main vehicles for carrying forward within each local authority area initiatives designed to **raise levels of adult literacy and numeracy**.

- 4.2 Reference is made to Report 108/02 considered by the Committee on 5 February 2002. That report sought the Committee's endorsement of the Angus Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan which had been submitted to the Scottish Executive on 23 December 2001.
- 4.3 The Action Plan was launched in Angus College on 28 March 2002. The actions set out in the Plan are designed to provide Adult Literacy and Numeracy support to 550 **new learners** by 2004. In addition to this specific target, the overall objective of the Action Plan is to ensure that arrangements are made within Angus to extend the range and quality of adult literacy and numeracy provision.
- 4.4 The Angus Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan has been the subject of favourable feedback from the Scottish Executive and minor amendments to the Action Plan have been made in the light of that feedback.

5 REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY LEARNING STRATEGY

- 5.1 In accordance with Scottish Executive requirements, the Angus Community Learning Strategy was reviewed in the period October 2001- January 2002. A review report was submitted to the Scottish Executive on 20 February 2002. That report:
- set out revised targets up to 31 March 2003
 - described progress made in implementing the strategy
 - provided revised targets which took account of the Adult Literacy and Numeracy Action Plan
 - included reference to priorities revised in the light of needs identified through the development of local Community Learning Plans
- 5.2 The amended Strategy will inform all future activity in Angus in relation to Community Learning and Development. The Strategy Partnership will take close account of key national developments which are described in the following section.

6 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

- 6.1 **A new National Centre** – A National Centre to support Community Learning and Development initiatives has been established within **Communities Scotland**, itself an Executive agency established by the Scottish Executive in November 2001 to streamline housing and regeneration activities in Scotland. The Regeneration Division of Communities Scotland has responsibility for the establishment of a development centre for Adult Literacy, Numeracy **and** Community Learning and Development. In pursuing this role it is likely that Communities Scotland will work with local authorities and local partnerships with a view to ensuring that community learning and development is embedded in community planning and community regeneration processes. Communities Scotland will also now assume responsibility for national training in respect of community learning and development initiatives previously carried out by Community Learning Scotland.
- 6.2 **“Towards Community Learning Plans”, a report by HM Inspectors of Education** – This report was published in May 2002 and details progress with the development and implementation of Community Learning Plans in Scotland. The report was prepared following a national survey by HMIE of efforts being made by local authorities in supporting the promotion of local community learning plans. In conducting the survey, HMIE visited 14 local authorities including Angus. The key findings of the report were that:
- the (Community Learning) planning process had already had positive results in many authorities
 - members of partnerships were more aware of each other's work and were collaborating informally even where community learning plans **had not been completed**
 - strong support from the Chief Executive and/or senior authority managers was a very positive fact in promoting a corporate approach to the development of the Community Learning Strategy and Community Learning Plans
 - lead officers with dedicated time was a crucial factor in effective planning and co-ordination of the Community Learning Strategy and Plans
 - the pace of development had been slow overall, raising questions about the capacity of all local authorities to complete and implement a number of plans proposed at January 2002
 - positive relationships between **community planning and community learning plans** were inhibited by the slow pace of development of one or both initiatives in most authorities
 - in some cases, local authorities and planning groups had difficulty in motivating partners to be involved and to maintain a high level of commitment

6.3 Principal recommendations of “Towards Community Learning Plans” – The following were the main recommendations made by HMIE:

- local authorities should set firm timescales for the completion and implementation of community learning plans
- local authorities should ensure appropriate linkage between **community learning plans** and **community plans**
- local authorities should take steps to communicate the purpose of partnerships and the community learning plan effectively to other council services, external organisations and local communities
- partnerships should ensure that their needs assessment and consultation activities focus on key priorities and fully involve the community
- planners should consider carefully the achievability of objectives and targets and express them in terms consistent with measurement of outputs and outcomes
- authorities should support partnerships in taking steps to include important services such as Social Work and schools

7 CONCLUSION

We are confident that good progress is being made in Angus in relation to the recommendations for the effective management of Community Learning Plans by HMIE listed in the previous paragraph. As indicated in paragraph 3.2 the target of producing eight Community Learning Plans in Angus has now been achieved. The work of the Angus Community Learning Strategy Partnership will be closely informed by the advice from HMIE provided in the May 2002 Report. This advice will also inform current deliberations about the scope, nature and number of local community plans and, of course, the relationship between the eight extant **community learning plans** and future **local community plans**.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly of this report.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising directly from this report.

10 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council the Director of Law and Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

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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