

**ANGUS COUNCIL**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**24 NOVEMBER 2011**

**VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION (VSE) EXERCISE: ARRANGEMENTS TO EVALUATE THE  
EDUCATION FUNCTIONS OF ANGUS COUNCIL**

**REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to advise the Education Committee about arrangements for a validated self-evaluation (VSE) exercise in relation to the Council's education functions, to be carried out jointly by Education Scotland and Angus Council.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee
- (a) note the terms of this report
  - (b) note the background to the introduction of jointly managed 'validated self-evaluation' exercises as a replacement for external inspection exercises
  - (c) note the nature and scope of and the procedural arrangements for the forthcoming exercise in relation to Angus Council's education functions.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The education functions of Angus Council have been the subject of very favourable reports by HM Inspectorate of Education, published in April 2002, September 2004 and August 2007. The last published report concluded that the authority had achieved a *"very high level of performance across the range of its education functions."*
- 2.2 In accordance with the terms of Section 9 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, HM Inspectorate of Education were charged with providing, when requested by Scottish Ministers, an external evaluation of the effectiveness of a local authority in exercising its functions in relation to the provision of education.
- 2.3 As members will be aware, HM Inspectorate of Education and Learning and Teaching Scotland have merged to form a new national body, Education Scotland. The statutory duties placed on HMIE by the 2000 Act now fall to Education Scotland.
- 2.4 Over the past three years, HM Inspectorate of Education has radically revised its approaches to inspection in response to the expectations of the Crerar report about the need to reduce the cost and the burdens associated with the external scrutiny of public services. Related commitments and procedural changes have resulted in a much more streamlined approach to the inspection of schools and in the decision to end the cycle of inspection of the education functions of local authorities.
- 2.5 Henceforth, the education functions of Scottish Councils will be scrutinised either as part of Best Value 2 audits in respect of all of the functions of a Council or during exercises jointly carried out by a Council and Education Scotland. The starting point of these exercises will be a Council's own self-evaluation findings and outcomes. These exercises are known as validated self-evaluation (VSE) exercises. They are

designed to support and challenge the scrutiny functions of education authorities and to align more closely external and internal scrutiny and audit arrangements.

### **3 AN OVERVIEW OF VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION (VSE)**

- 3.1 As indicated in the foregoing paragraph, VSE exercises aim to support and challenge the quality assurance work of an education authority through a scrutiny partnership between the Council and Education Scotland.
- 3.2 VSE is not an **inspection exercise**. It is founded on a Councils' **existing self-evaluation work and the findings and outcomes of that work**. It is a voluntary process, carried out by Education Scotland and the education authority. It is led by the authority. Where an authority does not seek to engage with Education Scotland to carry out a joint VSE exercise, its education functions will be evaluated externally through the Best Value 2 process.
- 3.3 The scrutiny process undertaken in the course of a VSE exercise draws upon (a) relevant Best Value 2 outcomes (b) the shared 'risk assessment' process in respect of the authority to which all national scrutiny bodies contribute, and crucially (c) the key findings, outcomes and impacts of the authority's own approach to self-evaluation.
- 3.4 VSE is not part of a programme of inspection activity. It can, however, clearly be part of a Council's own self-evaluation and improvement planning programme.
- 3.5 VSE is not an event but rather a major contribution to self-evaluation as a continuing process. VSE procedures recognise that the responsibility for improvement lies unambiguously with the education authority. The role of Education Scotland in VSE exercises is to support and challenge the authority with a view to strengthening and maximising the potential of its own scrutiny and self-evaluation procedures.

### **4 THE SCOPE OF VALIDATED SELF-EVALUATION AND THE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FIRST ANGUS VSE EXERCISE**

- 4.1 Between late May and mid-November 2011 the Chief Executive and I explored arrangements for the involvement of Angus Council in a validated self-evaluation exercise in discussion with the District Inspector and with the Assistant Chief Inspector (HMle) who has national responsibility for the VSE programme. In the light of these discussions, it has been agreed to engage formally with Education Scotland to carry out a VSE in relation to the Council's education functions.
- 4.2 Formal engagement activities will take place in the weeks commencing 23 January 2012 and 27 February 2012. Further activities may take place in the week commencing 19 March 2012. At a meeting with HM Inspectorate colleagues on 7 November 2011, it was agreed to arrange for VSE briefing meetings in the second week in December. It was also agreed that the Education Committee would be briefed by Education Scotland colleagues at its meeting on 19 January 2012.
- 4.3 Officers of Education Scotland will work closely with Angus Council staff to consider and support our approaches to self-evaluation and service improvement. Following that initial collaboration, the Council will be asked to submit a finalised self-evaluation document. The nature and extent of engagement activities will be determined with Education Scotland staff following detailed consideration of the completed self-evaluation and agreement about tasks to be undertaken jointly in respect of service improvement priorities.
- 4.4 It should be noted that there is a strong commitment within Education Scotland to ensure that the nature and extent of VSE activities take proportionate account of the self-evaluation evidence and documentation provided by the Council. VSE, as indicated above, is not an inspection exercise; its purpose is to validate or affirm (or otherwise) the authority's own self-evaluation.
- 4.5 Arrangements to be made for joint development and improvement tasks will (a) involve meetings with officers, elected members and stakeholders and (b), as a matter of course, explore current improvement commitments and the outcomes and impacts of these commitments.
- 4.6 At the conclusion of the VSE process, Education Scotland will work closely with Council officers to prepare and agree a web-based report which will affirm (or otherwise), with detailed reference to evidence submitted by the Council, its own self-evaluation. The VSE report will not provide ratings or evaluations on the previous HMle six point scale. However, it will provide clear indications of areas in which the Council has achieved in respect of its education functions and, no less importantly, the areas in which it has yet to

achieve. The overarching purpose of a VSE report is to support and challenge the education authority to secure continuous improvement across the range of its functions.

**5 RISK**

5.1 This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.

**6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the terms of this report.

**7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

**8 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 The issues contained in this report fall within an approved category that has been confirmed as exempt from an equalities perspective.

**9 CONSULTATION**

9.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Administration.

NEIL LOGUE  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Note:** 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.

**ED/NL/AM**