

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

22 AUGUST 2000

BEST VALUE SERVICE REVIEW – SECONDARY EDUCATION

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report describes the outcomes of the Secondary Education Best Value Service Review and seeks the Committee's approval of the Improvement Plan prepared by the Review Team.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report
- (b) notes and approves the terms of the Secondary Education Best Value Review Report (copies of the report are available in the Members' Lounge); and
- (c) approves the proposed Improvement Plan outlined in the Appendix to this report

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Members of the Education Committee will be aware that, as part of the government's Best Value initiative, all local authority services require to be reviewed over a five year period.
- 2.2 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 25 August 1998 when the Committee approved the contents of the five year plan for reviewing all aspects of educational service (Agenda item 7 refers)
- 2.3 The revised plan – which was included in the Education Service Plan for 1999-2000 was approved by the Committee at its meeting of 8 June 1999 (Agenda item 5 refers)
- 2.4 The Secondary Education Best Value Review has been a major undertaking and has spanned the period May 1999 – May 2000. There has been a significant commitment to obtaining the views of key stakeholders and in all some 46 consultation exercises have been carried out. Data from these exercises together with data from Benchmarking exercises and visits conducted in some 15 authorities have informed detailed evaluations of key areas of service delivery. These evidence-based evaluations have resulted in the publication of a wide-ranging Improvement Plan in relation to the 10 areas of the secondary education service which have been the subject of specific review in this exercise.

3 NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

- 3.1 The review has sought to:
 - describe the current organisation of secondary education in Angus
 - review curriculum structures, timetabling arrangements and the provision and deployment of staff
 - consider the overall quality of pupil attainment in Angus secondary schools and evaluate learning and teaching in S1/S2
 - examine the arrangements made to provide support for pupils

- evaluate the management of staff development and quality assurance
 - review arrangements for school administration of financial management in line with the key recommendations of “Time for Teaching – Improving Administration in Schools” (Accounts Commission, January 1999)
 - determine the scope for improvement in the above aspects of secondary education
- 3.2 In reviewing the aspects of secondary provision detailed in 3.1, the Best Value Review Team (which comprised 22 colleagues from Angus Secondary Schools, the Education Directorate, Education Support Services and the Finance Department) was organised into four sub-groups charged with conducting reviews in the following 10 areas of service:
- Overall pupil attainment and quality of learning and teaching in S1/S2
 - Curriculum
 - Teacher staffing
 - Timetabling
 - Support for pupils
 - Staff Development
 - Quality Assurance
 - School Administration
 - Technical/ICT support
 - Financial Management
- 3.3 The reviews conducted by the sub-groups were complemented by parallel exercises in relation to:
- a “Time for Teaching” audit carried out in line with “Time for Teaching – Improving Administration in Schools”, a joint study by the Accounts Commission for Scotland and HM Inspectors of Schools published in January 1999
 - a major research evaluation of S1/S2 provision in Angus Secondary Schools whose outcomes were considered in a report to the Education Committee on 6 June 2000 (Article 6 refers)
 - a Value for Money study into non-class contact time in secondary schools carried out by the Director of Finance [the report of this study is provided in Appendix 4.3D of the Best value report]
- 3.4 The ten areas of service listed in 3.2 above are the subject of detailed evaluations presented as 10 separate reports in sections 4.1 – 4.10 of the Best Value Review report. Each service report has resulted in a corresponding improvement plan provided in sections 8.1 –8.10 of the Best Value report. The following structure was used for the ten reports:
- **details of service area** – in which the service area is described
 - **consultation** – in which details are provided about consultation surveys and the responses to these from key stakeholders
 - **comparative analysis** – in which comparative exercises are described and commentaries provided on the responses to these from benchmarking partners
 - **evaluation and conclusion** – in which each area is evaluated and conclusions drawn from the outcomes of consultation/comparative exercises, school inspections and standards and quality audits. The key issues addressed in each evaluation section are framed as priority action points in the corresponding section of the Best Value Improvement Plan

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This extensive review of major aspects of the secondary education service in Angus has generated a detailed set of proposals to support Angus Council’s commitment to continuous improvement in the quality of education provided for secondary pupils. These proposals relate to arrangements to manage and deliver the curriculum as well as to arrangements to ensure high quality administration including financial management in secondary schools. With respect to financial management, section 4.10 of the report outlines proposals to increase the areas of expenditure devolved to schools. Wider proposals in relation to administrative procedures in schools will form the core of the Authority’s formal response to “Time for Teaching - Improvement Administration in Schools”.
- 4.2 The customer perspective gained through some 46 consultation exercises indicates a high level of satisfaction with the secondary education service provided in Angus. That perspective

mirrors the views of HM Inspectors provided in Angus secondary school inspection reports published since 1 April 1996.

- 4.3 Information which has been obtained from surveys of partner authorities suggest that secondary education provision in Angus compares favourably with provision elsewhere in Scotland. However, while there is much to be proud of in the secondary education service in Angus, there is no room for complacency and there is a whole-hearted commitment to seek sustainable improvement across all aspects of the service provided to secondary school pupils and their parents.
- 4.4 Section 8 of the Best Value report provides a detailed agenda for specific improvement which takes full account of the ten service evaluations presented in section 4 of the report. Those evaluations reflect the views of a broad partnership which includes pupils, parents, staff in education and other services, Her Majesty's Inspectors and external consultants and researchers.
- 4.5 The comprehensive nature of the proposed Improvement Plan offers a strong basis for the future management of secondary education in Angus. The considerable commitment to a genuine and active partnership demonstrated through the stakeholders surveys will assist Head Teachers and the education authority to ensure that secondary education responds effectively to the needs of young people, their families and their communities as we move forward into this new millennium.
- 4.6 It is important to reiterate here that there are significant demands on officers arising from the Best Value Regime. Demands relating to the conduct of reviews inevitably mean that there is less officer time available to manage the improvements to services which have been reviewed. These concerns have already been, as members will be aware, conveyed to the Scottish Office, the Accounts Commission and COSLA (agenda item 11, Policy and Resources Committee, 8 December 1998, refers)

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no implications in terms of net additional costs arising directly or indirectly from this report. While the review of school administration has resulted in proposals to increase non-teaching staff, the full year costs of these proposals (£130,000) would be met through compensatory savings within the revenue budget. A separate report detailing how such proposals would be implemented and how compensatory savings would be achieved will be brought back to the Committee for consideration. It is anticipated that recommendations in respect of an extension of areas of expenditure to be devolved to schools will generate savings as well as providing greater financial flexibility to Secondary Head Teachers.

6 CONSULTATION

In accordance with the standing orders of the Council, 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

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.

Appendix