

ANGUS COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
16 OCTOBER 2001
PUPIL CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT
REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report brings to the attention of the Education Committee arrangements being made to hold conferences to support pupil consultation and involvement procedures.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (a) notes the terms of this report
- (b) notes and endorses the arrangements being made to hold pupil consultation conferences in October/November 2001

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Commitments to involve pupils actively in the life and work of the school have long since been in place as a feature of effective practice in relation to personal and social education. These arrangements have increasingly been set on a formal footing so that a significant number of schools now have established bodies such as councils or senates.

2.2 Such developments accord with the spirit and indeed the letter of the fourth national priority for Scottish education which relates to Values and Citizenship and which is defined as a commitment "to work with parents to teach pupils respect for one another and their interdependence with other members of their neighbourhood and society and to teach them the duties and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society". Members will be aware that this priority and the other four national priorities have a significant influence on the nature and focus of development priorities for the education service in Angus detailed in the 2001-2004 service plan which was approved by the Education Committee on 5 June 2001 (Article 2 refers).

2.3 The involvement of pupils in the life and work of their school is now the subject of a statutory duty in terms of sections 6(1) and 6(3)(a) and (b) of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000. Provisions in these sections of the Act require "pupils to be given the opportunity to make their views known" about the school development plan; they also require that the development plan "shall include an account of the ways in which and the extent to which the Head Teacher of the school will:

- (a) consult with pupils in matters of the school
- (b) seek to involve them, when decisions require to be made concerning the everyday running of the school"

2.4 These statutory provisions are clearly in keeping with the letter and the spirit of Article 12 of the UN Convention on The Rights of The Child which articulates "the child's right to express an opinion without taking into account any matter of procedure affecting the child". What, therefore, has been good practice in relation to engaging pupils in matters affecting the life and work of their school is now enshrined as a legal duty.

3 PROPOSALS FOR PUPIL CONSULTATION/INVOLVEMENT CONFERENCES

3.1 The 2001-2004 Education Service Plan includes a priority commitment to "organise conferences for pupils and staff to support pupil consultation procedures" (section 5.01, page 51 refers). In taking forward this commitment there is a clearly stated intention to assist head teachers and teaching staff to fulfil the statutory duty described in the previous section of this report.

3.2 It is proposed to hold conferences for secondary pupils on 22 October 2001 and for primary pupils on 31 October and 1 November 2001. Teachers and pupils from each school will be invited to the

conferences which will largely be workshop-based. In the case of secondary schools 6 pupils covering S1-S6 will attend; in the case of primary schools 3 pupils from each school will attend. Draft programmes include presentations by local MSPs and elected members.

3.3 The secondary conference will take place in Bruce House, Arbroath, while the primary conferences will take place in the Lochside Leisure Centre in Forfar. The objectives of these conferences are:

- to make available to all Angus schools examples of current good practice in Angus and further afield
- to support teachers in their efforts to promote arrangements to establish formal pupil consultation and involvement procedures in their school
- to offer participating pupils activities which will enable them and ultimately their fellow pupils to feel more confident and competent in expressing their views and in making decisions about identified aspects of the “everyday running of their school”

It is intended that the secondary conference will be entitled “Right Hear, Right Now” while the primary conference will be entitled “The Pupils’ Voice”.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 These proposals which are targeted at children and young people **as school pupils** will in significant measure complement the excellent work in relation to active citizenship which has already been taken forward in Angus with young people in the community. This work, as members will be aware, relates to the formation of Councils in each Area Forum area as well as the formation of an Angus-wide Youth Congress.

It is anticipated that a report will be drafted following the conferences and it is hoped that the report once issued will be seen as a good practice guide which will assist schools to address effectively and enthusiastically the commitment to work co-operatively with pupils and to involve them meaningfully in the everyday running of their school.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are nominal costs associated with these conferences and these will in the main be met from the Education Department Revenue Budget. It is anticipated that some sponsorship will be forthcoming through the Angus Business Partnership in relation to costs of the conference materials.

6 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The terms of this report relate to an initiative which it is hoped will enhance respect for the rights of all children and young people to be listened to in relation to matters affecting their education.

7 CONSULTATION

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

Programmes for the conferences have been drawn up following consultations with groups of Angus primary and secondary pupils.

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