

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

22 JANUARY 2002

THE DISCIPLINE TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS – RESOURCES FOR 2001/2002

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report draws the attention of the Education Committee to additional resources which have been made available at short notice by the Scottish Executive.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a notes the terms of the letter from the Scottish Executive dated 29 November 2001 (Appendix 1);
- b approves in principle expenditure to create Pupil Support Bases in:
 - Arbroath Academy
 - Arbroath High School
 - Brechin High School
 - Forfar Academy
 - Montrose Academy

funded by the resources to which reference is made in the enclosed letter. (Approximate cost - £227,974) on the understanding that this expenditure will be incurred in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations;

- c notes and endorses my intention to effect a short-term secondment and to establish a short-life working group to begin the process of Policy Review and Planning described in paragraphs 2 and 3 in the enclosed SEED letter;
- d instructs me to write to the Scottish Executive urging them to re-consider the timescale within which the proposed expenditure can be incurred, specifically seeking flexibility to enable the Council to have the opportunity to carry forward as much of the proposed expenditure as possible into financial year 2002/2003.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In June 2001, the Scottish Executive published "Better Behaviour, Better Learning" – a report of the national Discipline Task Group.
- 2.2 On 29 November 2001, the enclosed letter (Appendix 1) was issued by the Scottish Executive.

- 2.3 In mid December 2001, the Council received copies of the “Joint Action Plan” based on the “Better Behaviour, Better Learning” report.

3 ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

- 3.1 Paragraph 6 of the enclosed letter confirms that a grant of £68,392 is now available to Angus Council for Policy Review and Planning, and that a grant of £227,974 is available to Angus Council for the creation of Pupil Support Bases.

3.2 Creation of Pupil Support Bases

- 3.2.1 Since receipt of the SEED letter in early December, some preliminary work has been undertaken on the possibility of creating Pupil Support Bases. The creation of such bases is potentially of benefit to all our schools, particularly our secondary schools, but given the monies available it seems likely that these monies will only be sufficient to cover the costs of creating a maximum of 4 or possibly 5 such bases. Preliminary discussions have taken place with a view to establishing bases in:

- Arbroath Academy
- Arbroath High School
- Brechin High School
- Forfar Academy
- Montrose Academy

A good case can be made for the creation of Pupil Support Bases in any one of the other three Angus secondary schools, and it is hoped that these schools can be offered additional support at some point in the future. However, at present the needs of the five schools identified would appear to be slightly greater than those of the three secondary schools not yet included.

- 3.2.2 Recent experience tells us that the time-scale required from conception to completion of any building project (no matter how small) is reasonably lengthy. To incur building expenditure of £227,974 in the period between 1 December 2001 and 31 March 2002 seems totally unrealistic. Informal discussions with Civil Servants have wrung equally informal concessions on this point; we are now being told that, provided we commit the funding before the end of March 2002 and that the expenditure is actually incurred before the end of June 2002, then this part of the grant will still be payable. Even with this concession, it is by no means certain that all necessary plans will have been drawn up and fully effected, but there seems little choice for the Council but to do its best to take matters forward within the timescale set for us.

3.3 Policy Review and Planning

- 3.3.1 Although expenditure of the grant of £68,392 for “Policy Review and Planning” does not have to face the obstacles relating to building projects, nonetheless, a sum of this magnitude is difficult to spend wisely in the intolerably short timescale provided.

- 3.3.2 A JCC Working Group was already in existence with a remit to consider positive behaviour management. That Working Group has been expanded and its remit now includes an overview of the implementation of “Better Behaviour, Better Learning.” The preliminary deliberations of this Working Group on the expenditure of this grant suggests that it would be desirable to allocate expenditure in the following ways:

- full-time secondment of an appropriately experienced colleague for approximately 3 months
- establishment of short-life working group
- purchase of some materials
- devolvement of some funding (to secondary schools only at this stage)

3.3.3 Clearly it is possible to take forward each and every one of the above areas of expenditure, and this is being done. However, it would be infinitely preferable were we to have the luxury of some more planning time and it is therefore recommended that the Committee should express its concern on this point to the Executive with a view to seeking an extension of the deadline within which expenditure has to be incurred. In the meantime, it is also recommended that the Committee should endorse my actions in taking forward these expenditure plans just as speedily as possible.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All expenditure will be met from the Scottish Executive allocations. In the event that some of the expenditure on Pupil Support Bases is not expended by the end of the current financial year, and on the basis that the Scottish Executive are allowing the Council to carry these resources forward, they will be ringfenced for this purpose and carried forward in full into financial year 2002/2003.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS

There are no Human Rights arising directly from consideration of this report.

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 Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

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

JAA/CJ

Education Department
Pupil Support and Inclusion Division

3A (N)
Victoria Quay
Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

29 November 2001

Dear Sir or Madam,

**THE DISCIPLINE TASK GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS
RESOURCES FOR 2001-2002**

Scottish Ministers have decided that resources should be made available in the current financial year to support implementation of the recommendations of the Discipline Task Group. This letter provides details of the arrangements for application, distribution and payment of grant.

Rationale

1.The Discipline Task Group studied the causes of poor behaviour among pupils in schools in a wide range of Scottish Executive, local authorities and schools, as appropriate to their functions. Its report "Better Behaviour-Better Learning" was published on 19 June 2001. As agreed at the time of publication, an Action Plan would be needed to put the recommendations into effect. After further consultation an action plan will be published shortly. However, Scottish Ministers wish to make resources available now in the current financial year to assist progress on the functions described below.

Policy Review and Planning

2.Many of the recorded actions involve review of policies or practices within authorities and within schools in the current financial year - to allow early implementation - Ministers have provided £3.0m within specific grant to assist authorities and schools in this by providing e.g. for teaching staff cover costs, seminars, consultation processes with staff, parents and carers.

3.The DTG Report drew heavily upon existing good practice within Scottish local authorities and schools. In line with the Ministerial aim of raising all to the standard of the best,

Scottish Ministers have identified the following recommendations/actions which it is intended that the grant should be used to implement.

Recommendation/action 6 "*Schools should agree and adopt policies for the management of pupil care, welfare and discipline, including the promotion of positive behaviour...*"

Recommendation/action 7 "*Local authorities should provide support and advice for all schools in the formulation of policies relating to pupil care, welfare and discipline...*"

Recommendation/action 9 "*...schools should consult pupils, teachers and parents/carers in order to agree a dress code for children and young people...*"

Recommendation/action 11 "*Local authorities should provide guidance and advice to all staff regarding the levels of intervention they expect from them with respect to their handling of disciplinary matters in classrooms and public areas within the school.*"

Recommendation/action 13 "*Schools should ensure that there are formal mechanisms in place to allow all pupils to regularly share their views with teachers and other pupils, and to participate in decision-making in matters which affect them directly...*"

Recommendation/action 14 "*Schools should ensure that opportunities are provided for senior pupils at both primary and secondary levels to take responsibility for "buddying" and/or mentoring junior pupils.*"

Pupil Support Bases

4. There is a need also to provide suitable and appropriate accommodation and support for those receiving the grant within the current year to assist conversion, equipping or redecoration etc. of space to provide an early opportunity for such facilities to be provided. The grant is intended to be used to implement the following recommendations:-

Recommendation 22 "*Flexible support provision, including in-class support and facilities to educate children and young people outwith the normal classroom environment, should be established in secondary schools and designated primary schools*".

Recommendation 23 "*In planning for new and refurbished school buildings, local authorities should seek to ensure that suitable and appropriate accommodation is made available for supporting the needs of children and young people who may need to be educated outwith the normal classroom environment. They should also consider how to adapt existing school buildings to allow this to happen.*"

Allocation

5. Funding is offered to local authorities under the Grants for Improvements in School Education (School Education Act 1980) (as used for GAE allocation).

Available Grant

6. Grant of £«Grant1» is available to your authority for policy review and planning and of £«Grant2» for capital expenditure.

Conditions of Grant

7. Review and planning funds should be spent on activities or facilities towards implementing recommendations of the review.

8. Provision for pupil support bases in schools should be spent on facilities, equipment, conversion, etc.

9. The grant is available only in the financial year ending on 31 March 2002 and it will not be possible to carry forward unspent funds.

10. The grant for each purpose can not be exceeded and one allocation cannot be used for the other.

11. In the event that the authority disposes of an asset with a value of more than £1000 which has been purchased wholly or partly out of the grant and shall repay to her such sums as, after consultation with her, she may require.

12. The authority shall also repay the Minister such amount as the Minister may, after consultation with her, require.

Application and Payment

13. Local authorities should return the attached grant application form to Jill Lyall at the above address.

14. After 31 March 2002 (and by 31 July 2002) your authority should send a certificate (as attached) to the Minister (used to meet eligible expenditure) a sum equal to the amount of the overpayment shall be repayable to the Minister.

15. Any enquiries about this letter or these arrangements should be addressed to Jill Lyall at the above address.

16. A copy of this letter has been forwarded to the Director of Education, Director of Social Work, or other appropriate officer.

Yours faithfully



Joan Fraser
Head of Pupil Support and Inclusion Division