

ANGUS COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE 18 APRIL 2000
 EDUCATION COMMITTEE..... 25 APRIL 2000

FEES FOR INDEPENDENT SPECIAL SCHOOLS

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report proposes that Angus Council follows the advice issued by COSLA that Councils should not generally agree increases in fees for independent special schools in 2000-2001 which are more than 2.5% above the equivalent rate set for 1999-2000.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education and Social Work Committees:-

- I. agree to implement the COSLA advice relating to fees for independent special schools for financial year 2000-2001;
- II. instruct the Directors of Social Work and Education to advise the relevant independent special schools of this decision and to undertake any necessary negotiations concerning current or future placements;
- III. instruct the Director of Social Work to advise the Chair of the Children's Panel and Area Reporter of this decision;
- IV. instruct the Directors of Social Work and Education to report back on the continuing negotiations between COSLA and the Scottish Independent Special Schools Group (SISSG) and any issues which arise from the implementation of the COSLA guidance by Angus Council.

2 INTRODUCTION

Reference is made to report no 249/00 wherein the Director of Social Work advised the Social Work Committee of continuing cost pressures on the social work department revenue budget and proposals for addressing these cost pressures. One of the cost pressures referred to was a budget jointly managed between education and social work departments for residential schools. There has been growing concern about the increases in fees being set by independent special schools which have in many cases been significantly above wage and non-wage inflation levels in recent years. The range of increases notified to Councils by independent special schools for finance year 2000-2001 is 2% to 26%.

3 PROPOSAL

Discussions have been taking place among COSLA, representatives of Councils and SISSG to discuss ways to improve transparency and dialogue over fee setting and special provision by the schools. As outlined in the attached letter from COSLA there is continuing difficulty in persuading SISSG that their fee levels should be influenced by Councils.

A recent meeting of COSLA social work chairs network agreed that COSLA should issue advice that councils should not generally agree increases which are above the anticipated rate of increase in salary costs of 2.5%. The Head of Policy Development has issued advice (attached to this report) to this effect and has notified the Chair of SISSG and the Principal Reporter at the Scottish Children's Reporter Administration of this position. He has also asked the Principal Reporter to inform Children's Panel members of the advice which has been issued.

The Education and Social Work Committees are asked to agree to the implementation of the COSLA advice attached as an appendix to this report and to agree the specific recommendations set out above.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Due to fluctuations in placements in special independent schools, it is not possible to give an exact account of the savings which would result from implementing the COSLA advice. The overall impact would be to reduce pressure on a budget which is currently overspending to the level of £132,000 within the social work department and £108,000 within education department in financial year 1999-2000.

5 CONSULTATION

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

W B Robertson
Director of Social Work

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.

Social Work Department Only

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE.....(DATE)

REPORT TITLE

After approval, copy report to :

ACTIONS REQUIRED

WHAT	WHO	WHEN