

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 10 NOVEMBER 2015

CONSULTATION ON THE SECONDARY SCHOOL WEEK

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE

ABSTRACT

We need to ensure that our Secondary school curriculum structures and Secondary school week arrangements are as effective as possible to support our continuing work on Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) and the introduction of the Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) initiative. In February, Elected Members supported a consultation with stakeholders regarding the Secondary school week structure. This paper requests Elected Members approval to implement changes to the Secondary school week from August 2017.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the findings of the consultation on the Secondary school week with Schools and Learning Secondary staff and parents through Parent Councils.
- (ii) Agree that there should be a change to the structure of the Secondary school week from the current thirty five period structure to a thirty three period structure.
- (iii) Agree that the preferred model for Angus would be one of three longer days and two shorter days but this would be subject to further detailed consultation.
- (iv) Agree that this change should take place after an appropriate transition and preparation phase with an implementation date of August 2017.
- (v) Agree to further detailed consultation with all stakeholders (as outlined in Appendix 1).
- (vi) Request a further report in May 2016 outlining progress.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

- 2 Angus is a good place to live in, work in and visit
- 3 Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 All Angus Secondary schools moved to a thirty five period week in 2012. This arrangement allows for thirty teaching periods of fifty minutes and five form time periods of thirty minutes each. The current model allows for maximum efficiency of teacher deployment where the teacher concerned is also a Form Tutor. A number of local authorities have moved to or are moving to a thirty three period asymmetric week on efficiency grounds as detailed in Section 4.3. However, there are no savings to be made to moving to an alternative structure as there is a Scottish Government requirement to maintain teacher numbers and ratios at the September 2014 level.

3.2 Raising attainment, closing the gap and providing more opportunities for wider achievement must be key drivers in any curriculum structure as we fully implement the principles of a Curriculum for Excellence. The Scottish Government's response to the Wood Commission recommendations outlined in Developing Scotland's Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy require schools to provide a wide range of work related learning opportunities and flexible pathways which engage employers, partners and colleges.

3.3 At their meeting on 24 February 2015, the Children and Learning Committee agreed that there should be wider consultation and requested a full report on the outcome for change to the structure of the secondary school week.

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Key Drivers for Change

4.1.1 The initial consultation sought the opinions of Secondary school staff into the desirability of moving to a thirty three period week from the current thirty five period week, from session 2016-17. The current structure has thirty teaching periods of fifty minutes each and five Form Time periods of thirty minutes each. Changing to a thirty three period week would free up additional learning and teaching time as an immediate benefit by reducing the time available for Form Time.

4.1.2 Many Scottish local authorities have moved to a thirty three period week to improve the pupil experience in light of developing Curriculum for Excellence and to increase the efficiency of their curriculum model.

4.1.3 We believe that the underlying principles of this proposed change will lead to improved outcomes and broader experiences for learners. We believe that changing the curricular structure in our Secondary schools will:

- Increase focus on raising attainment & closing the gap;
- Provide more opportunities for wider achievement;
- Give more time for learning and teaching, particularly in supporting numeracy and literacy;
- Developing our Young Workforce (DYW) requires schools to provide a wide range of work related learning opportunities and flexible pathways which engage employers, partners and colleges.

4.2 Benefits of Changing to a Thirty Three Period Week

4.2.1 The proposed structure provides more flexibility for curriculum design as potentially an additional 2 periods become available. This is of particular significance in addressing the delivery of the Senior Phase. It would also give greater flexibility in the Broad General Education (BGE), enhancing the choices available to our young people by offering a much richer educational experience through greater personalisation of learners' experiences.

4.2.2 The thirty three period week structure allows appropriate blocks of 50 or 100 minutes to support learning and teaching in the delivery of the Entitlements. The structure is capable of evolving and being adapted as the Senior Phase of CfE develops and DYW is fully implemented in Angus secondary schools.

4.2.3 The opportunity for collegiate working on the shorter days, within the working time agreement, will potentially even out the working week of teachers.

4.2.4 Opportunities to improve partnership working with FE, HE and Communities by using the opportunities provided by the common timetabling structure to create appropriate blocks of time to maximise the availability of courses and programmes to schools.

4.2.5 These changes will help schools to continue to maximise the resources they have available to deliver the very best curriculum for our children and young people. A thirty three period week is both viable and sustainable with a structure we can continue to afford and staff.

4.3 Local Authorities – Practice and Impact

- 4.3.1 This structure is not new or untested. It has been operating in schools and Authorities across Scotland including Scottish Borders Council, South Lanarkshire Council, North Lanarkshire Council, South Ayrshire Council and West Dunbartonshire Council for a number of years. Other local authorities are also currently consulting with stakeholders about the possibility of moving to the thirty three period week structure in their secondary schools.
- 4.3.2 Evidence from other authorities who are already operating the S4-6 senior school on thirty three periods is that the structure is more efficient and enables schools to offer a curriculum that maintains and increases the breadth of choice for learners. East Renfrewshire Council who has operated this structure for seven years, has no doubt that it continues to support raising attainment. However many councils, prior to the Scottish Government's 2014 requirement to maintain teacher numbers, saw it as an opportunity to make savings without having a direct impact on pupils and it being a more efficient use of time.
- 4.3.3 There is merit in considering this structure at this point in time as a move to it would not be a step in the dark, but a move to a well-tested structure.

4.4 Initial Consultation Process

- 4.4.1 On 17 August 2015, a briefing paper was issued to all Secondary staff detailing the proposals to change the structure of the school week from 2016-17 onwards. On the same day, Senior Leadership Teams in all Secondary schools delivered a thirty minute presentation and Q&A session to staff detailing the proposals. During the weeks commencing 24 August 2015 and 31 August 2015, drop-in sessions for staff took place in each of the eight Secondary schools led by senior Schools and Learning managers.
- 4.4.2 All staff were then invited to participate in an online survey which closed on 15 September 2015. Staff were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or didn't know for the following statements:
1. There are benefits to changing the structure of the Secondary school week.
 2. Secondary Schools in Angus should adopt a thirty three period week from session 2016-17 onwards to increase opportunities and experiences for our young people.
- 4.4.3 Letters were sent out on 24 August 2015 to the chairs of all the Secondary Parent Councils, requesting the opportunity to speak to each group regarding the proposals. At the time of writing, senior Schools and Learning managers have met with six Parent Councils and have had a written response from one. A further meeting has been organised with one Parent Council for 18 November 2015.

4.5 Initial Consultation Responses - Staff

- 4.5.1 216 staff responded to the online survey. The detailed results are shown below. In summary,

Question 1	Positive 64.35%	Negative 22.69%	Don't Know 12.96%
Question 2	Positive 55.10%	Negative 28.24%	Don't Know 16.67%

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't know
There are benefits to changing the structure of the secondary school week	27%	37%	9%	14%	13%
Secondary schools in Angus should adopt a thirty three period week from session 2016-17 onwards to increase opportunities and experiences for our young people	26%	29%	11%	18%	17%

4.5.2 Secondary school staff also provided 176 written comments to the consultation questions that can be categorised as follows in order of response size:

- Positive support for the proposed change to school week;
- Request for further information regarding case studies, possible models etc;
- Timing:
 - Implementation;
 - School day times;
 - Lunch duration;
- Negative comments regarding the proposed change to the school week;
- Childcare concerns;
- Form Time issues.

4.6 Initial Consultation Responses – Parent Councils

4.6.1 The written response from one Parent Council was strongly supportive of the change. In the meetings with the Parent Councils, four were openly supportive of changes to the school week that would improve learning and teaching. One other Parent Council requested additional information but understood the need for change. A further Parent Council was opposed to the change in so far as it would reduce Form Time. This group preferred to see a wholesale improvement in the application of Form Time across the authority. It was noted at the meeting that this school has already re-assigned one of the Form Time periods to additional Mathematics. The eighth Parent Council have asked to discuss the proposals with Schools and Learning staff at their next meeting in November.

4.7 Responding to the Initial Consultation

4.7.1 What came through strongly from the consultation responses was clear support for change to the present Secondary school week structure. In the briefing paper to Secondary staff, examples were given of how the week could be set out. Through the responses and the consultation meetings there was no preferred model. The Schools and Learning team are of the opinion that the structure of three longer days and two shorter days (example - Figure 1) is the one that would be most beneficial to the learning of our young people. We believe that the structure of four longer days and one half day (example - Figure 2) would be more disruptive to families. We would now like to carry out detailed consultation with all stakeholders over a longer period to ascertain the preferred structure going forward.

Figure 1

Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4	Lunch	Period 5	Period 6	Period 7
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Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4	Lunch	Period 5	Period 6
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Figure 2

Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4	Lunch	Period 5	Period 6	Period 7
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Period 1	Period 2	Interval	Period 3	Period 4	Period 5	Lunch
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It should be noted that the examples above are purely for illustration. The actual structure to be adopted would be decided following further detailed consultation.

4.7.2 Requests for further information about the structure, impact and organisation of such a change were made by a number of respondents. It would be our intention to hold workshops to explore and refine models of universal support that would be agreed by all stakeholders. We would also look to develop case studies from authorities around the country who had adopted the thirty three period week structure.

- 4.7.3 One key message from the initial consultation was the timing of the implementation. We had originally proposed an August 2016 start date for the new thirty three period structure to be in place in all schools. Concerns were raised that this timescale was too short and we acknowledge these views. Therefore, we are of the opinion that we should carry out detailed preparatory and transition work during sessions 2015-16 and 2016-17 with a view to full implementation in August 2017. Schools would be encouraged to make changes to Form Time over the next two sessions which would see an increase in time for learning and teaching, in preparation for the new structure. An implementation date of August 2017 would give appropriate time for the preparation of new timetables and organising logistical changes i.e. bus contracts.

5. PROPOSALS

- 5.1 It is proposed that Angus secondary schools move to a 33 period week at the start of the session 2017-18.
- 5.2 A thirty three period week structure will increase the blocks of time available for teaching in curricular areas by reducing the time allocation to Form Time. The proposal to reduce the amount of Form Time is not being taken lightly. A full review of Form Time was carried out from December 2014 to March 2015. This involved comprehensive consultation with pupils and staff from each of the eight Secondary schools. It found that there was significant variation in the quality of the Form Time experience for learners. It also found that a number of schools had already reassigned Form Time periods for subject teaching, most notably to support Mathematics and Numeracy.
- 5.3 A thirty three period week is an operational structure that does not in itself deliver better experiences for pupils. However, what it does do is provide a framework within which subjects can have greater parity particularly for S4 Mathematics and English. Universal support for pupils through Form Time (or an agreed alternative) could be more targeted and focused more clearly on improving outcomes for young people. As an Authority we would look to have common core times during the week where schools could work in partnership with strategic partners and schools.
- 5.4 Reducing the lunch break to 50 minutes on all days would minimise the impact of the longer days. Having the lunch break the same time as a normal period length would also create greater flexibility in the system.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There should be a full cost benefit analysis of any preferred options, following wider consultation. This will include full consideration of the implications for school transport.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

Rodger Hill
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Appendix 1

Thirty Three Period Week - Consultation, Preparation and Transition Key Dates

Date	Activity
November 2015	Children and Learning Committee decision
December 2015	Gathering of case studies from local authorities Preparation for public/parent/carer meetings
January 2016	First round of public/parent/carer meetings – 4 Secondary schools Pupil Focus Groups – 4 Secondary Schools Staff consultation meetings – 4 Secondary Schools Universal support workshops Preparation of Frequently Asked Questions Secondary schools to consider changes to Form Time for session 2016-17 Joint Head Teacher Meeting – information update
February 2016	First round of public/parent/carer meetings – 4 Secondary schools Pupil Focus Groups – 4 Secondary Schools Staff consultation meetings – 4 Secondary Schools Universal support workshop – testing the model School week proposals agreed Consultation on the school week proposals opens (6 weeks) Publication of Frequently Asked Questions to stakeholders
March 2016	Decision on the universal support model to be adopted in 2017-18 Consultation on the school week proposals closes Joint Head Teacher Meeting – information update
April 2016	Decision on the preferred structure of the school week Secondary School Timetablers Short-Life Working Group commences Paper submitted to the Children and Learning Committee
May 2016	Children and Learning Committee decision on the operational structure of the thirty three period week Following Committee decision publication of updated Frequently Asked Questions to all stakeholders School Week Logistics Short-Life Working Group commences Second round of public/parent/carer meetings – 4 Secondary schools Information sessions for school pupils – 4 Secondary schools Staff information sessions – 4 Secondary Schools Joint Head Teacher Meeting – information update
June 2016	Second round of public/parent/carer meetings – 4 Secondary schools Information sessions for school pupils – 4 Secondary schools Staff information sessions – 4 Secondary Schools Secondary School Timetablers Short-Life Working Group finishes Joint Head Teacher Meeting – information update
August 2016	Last year of current school week structure commences

	Secondary schools – flexible approaches to Form Time use in operation
September 2016	School Week Logistics Short-Life Working Group finishes
October 2016	Initial preparation of course choice information and column structure for 2017-18 timetables by all Secondary schools
November 2016	Progress report to the Children and Learning Committee
January 2017- April 2017	Course choice selection 2017-18 Timetable preparation
May 2017	Information schedule to the Children and Learning Committee
August 2017	New school week structure commences