

ANGUS COUNCIL – 12 SEPTEMBER 2024

PLANS & BUDGETS – CONSULTATION PROPOSALS FOR 2025/26 BUDGET SETTING

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

ABSTRACT

This report advises members of a plan for communication and consultation as part of the Council's 2025/26 planning and budget setting process. The report seeks approval of the proposed plan. It is proposed that implementation of the plan be monitored through the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG).

1. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

1.1 This report is relevant to all of the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) notes the background to the proposals and that these are to be taken forward in line with the Council's Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy;
- b) approves the 2025/26 budget communication and consultation plan set out in this report and the content of Stage 1 as set out in Appendix A;
- c) agrees that implementation of the plan be monitored through the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG);
- d) notes that a further report with the proposed content of Stage 2 of the consultation will come back to members for approval prior to being launched.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Over the years the Council has adopted a range of approaches for communication, consultation and engagement on its plans and budgets. These have ranged from communication only, to detailed consultation about specific budget options using statistical techniques and online tools together with public engagement events.

3.2 It remains the case that the scale and severity of the Council's financial challenges (our projected budget gaps) are such that there is very limited room for manoeuvre on savings options. This means that seeking views from Angus citizens on multiple choice options for how to make savings has limitations. We should, however, still seek to inform, engage and, where appropriate, consult on our plans, priorities and budgets where this will help inform decision-making. This work will also support elected members in making decisions and is in line with good practice. The Accounts Commission Overview Report 2023 refers to the need for Councils to "better involve service users and communities, including those with lived experience as they redesign services".

3.3 In December 2022 the Policy & Resources Committee agreed a Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy ([Report 407/22](#) refers) which set out the Council's position, role, and commitments to ensure community engagement is integrated into Council activities to support decision making, build relationships and strengthen communities. The policy seeks to improve engagement processes and outcomes by encouraging a consistent approach and continual learning through evaluation and expanding the range of engagement methods used.

3.4 Among the principles included in The Policy are:-

- To provide effective, accountable, honest, open, and accessible communications, consultations, and engagements
- To make clear distinctions between communications, consultations, and engagements and ensure that these terms are used appropriately.
- To ensure that there is a clear purpose for the communication, consultation, or engagement
- To use a variety of communications, engagement, and consultation tools to inform and develop good practice in all our services

4. PROPOSED PLAN FOR 2025/26 BUDGET

4.1 Councils employ a range of approaches to communication and consultation on their plans and budgets but officers are proposing a two stage approach as described below.

Consultation Stage 1 – a four-week consultation over September/October 2024 seeking views on the existing priorities and actions in the Angus Council Plan. The current priorities and actions in the Council Plan were agreed more than two years ago, so seeking public views on whether these are the activities people want the Council to continue to focus on and the relative priority of each of these would be a valuable first step as we work towards setting the 2025/26 Budget. The proposed Stage 1 consultation content is set out in Appendix A for members consideration and approval.

Consultation Stage 2 – a six-week consultation over December/January seeking views on specific budget proposals and options. This is currently envisaged to be a mix of higher-level choices like the balance between cuts and council tax increases as well as more granular options such as whether to implement specific savings/cuts proposals. The final content of Stage 2 can be determined once the outcome from Stage 1 is known and updates on service budgets and change programme proposals have been considered by the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG). A further report with the proposed content of Stage 2 of the consultation will come back to members for approval prior to being launched.

4.2 It is proposed that oversight of the communication and consultation plan set out in this report be undertaken by the PBSG as a natural part of that Group's work in developing the Council's budget strategy.

4.3 As with other consultations the Council's Engage Angus online tool is proposed to be used as the main method of sharing the consultation and receiving feedback but paper copies will also be made available in libraries and other public building across Angus. Communication as part of the Council's 2025/26 budget setting process will use a variety of methods in line with previous years.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Existing staff and systems will be used to deliver the plan. Staff capacity for this work is however limited so it will be necessary to ensure that the time committed to it is proportionate to the benefit and impact it will have.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

6.1 The following risks from the Corporate Risk Register are relevant to this report:-

- Financial Sustainability
- Transforming for the Future

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESMENT

8.1 An equality impact assessment has been prepared and is attached as Appendix B.

9. CHILDRENS RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 A Childrens Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been carried out within the EIA.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on in preparing this report.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – 2025/26 Plans and Budgets Communication and Consultation Plan – Stage 1

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix A – Plans & Budgets Consultation 2024 – Stage 1 – Proposed Content

Background

Angus Council, like all local authorities, is currently managing the most challenging financial circumstances it has ever faced due to a period of high inflation, increased demand for services, wider economic challenges and real terms reductions in its income.

The Council, our staff, and partners in the Angus Health & Social Care Partnership and ANGUSalive have transformed and redesigned services to save more than £91 million (27.5%) over the last 11 years. Making these savings has been necessary to ensure the ongoing financial viability of the Council. Delivering such savings, is a significant achievement and has happened despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, a cost of living crisis and serious storms in the last few years.

Independent assessment by the Accounts Commission highlights Angus Council as an organisation providing best value to local taxpayers.

Despite this, the council must still make further savings to close the budget gaps predicted for the financial year 2025/2026, and onwards. In last year's communications, we explained that we are at the point of closing, stopping, or changing some services. These include a range of services we do not need to provide by law as well as some we do. We know many of these services are valued by those who use them and can offer preventative solutions to stop problems escalating. We know that this is hard to hear, and it is hard to do, but we have a finite amount of money to spend, and must legally balance our budget each year. Angus Council must therefore decide where cuts will be made.

Our Consultation

To help inform the decisions Angus Council needs to make, we are asking you, our citizens, what is really important to you and what you think is really important for Angus.

We identified a number of priorities in our Council Plan which are based on the priorities in the Angus Community Plan, which sets out strategic aims for Angus to achieve the vision:

Angus is a great place to live, work and visit

Whilst each of these areas remains important, we would like to consult on how we might prioritise within these areas and to better understand your views.

We will then use this feedback to inform specific proposals for service change and savings, as we work with colleagues to minimise the potentially negative impact of these changes.

Angus Community Plan Priorities – Survey

We group our priorities under three headings, caring for our Economy, our People and our Place. Each priority has a set of actions to achieve these priorities.

For each of these priorities:

- please rank them in order of importance from 1 to 5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important.
- please use the free text box to make comments if you think other things are more important.
- Then please do the same for the actions.

Caring for our Economy

Angus Community Plan Priority	Circle how important you feel this priority is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Support long term economic growth, particularly in offshore renewable energy.	1 2 3 4 5
Encourage and invest in jobs across Angus which pay fairly and treat employees equally and with respect.	1 2 3 4 5
Support new entrepreneurship across Angus.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above priorities including if you think other things are more important for the Angus economy	
Angus Council Actions	Circle how important you feel this action is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Continue to maximise UK and Scottish Government funding which supports economic growth, such as the Tay Cities Regional Deal.	1 2 3 4 5
Support and deliver training and other programmes that help people into work and support businesses to grow and invest in Angus.	1 2 3 4 5
Look for more commercial opportunities in our contracts and support locally business to grow whenever possible through a *community wealth building approach.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above actions including if you think other actions are more important for the Angus economy	

* Community Wealth Building puts money back into the local economy and helps residents by building a strong local economy. You can find out more on this link: [Community Wealth Building](#)

Caring for our People

Angus Community Plan Priority	Circle how important you feel this priority is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Reduce inequalities in all our communities.	1 2 3 4 5
Provide the best start in life for children.	1 2 3 4 5
Create more opportunities for people to live well and achieve their personal goals.	1 2 3 4 5
Improve physical, mental health and wellbeing.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above priorities including if you think other things are more important in caring for people in Angus	
Angus Council Actions	Circle how important you feel this action is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Make sure families in Angus are getting all the financial support available to them.	1 2 3 4 5
Support opportunities for children, young people and adults to progress in their learning.	1 2 3 4 5
protect people in our communities who are at risk of or have experienced significant harm.	1 2 3 4 5
when children cannot safely live at home, to keep our children local in Angus, providing for their education and family needs.	1 2 3 4 5
work as a close partner of Angus Health and Social Care Partnership to meet the health and social care needs of our adults.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above actions including if you think other actions are more important in caring for people in Angus	

Caring for our Place

Angus Community Plan Priority	Circle how important you feel this priority is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Protect and enhance our natural and built environment.	1 2 3 4 5
Enable communities across Angus to be strong, welcoming, safe and resilient	1 2 3 4 5
Make sure our local services are accessible.	1 2 3 4 5
Improve WiFi, mobile signal, and Broadband in and around Angus.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above priorities including if you think other things are more important in caring for Angus as a place to live, work and visit.	
Angus Council Actions	Circle how important you feel this action is on a scale of 1-5 where 1 is not important and 5 is very important
Act against climate change by delivering our Transition to Net Zero Action Plan: 2022 to 2030.	1 2 3 4 5
Reduce our energy use by reducing the number of our properties and managing the buildings we do have well to reduce energy use.	1 2 3 4 5
Coordinate activity and develop a vision for our communities, through relevant plans and strategies.	1 2 3 4 5
Deliver affordable housing via our Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP).	1 2 3 4 5
deliver efficient waste services and encourage more recycling and cleaner streets.	1 2 3 4 5
Maintain our roads, pavements, lighting, and other infrastructure efficiently and focus our resources on our priority routes and infrastructure.	1 2 3 4 5
Work with our communities to help them deliver their ideas on what would improve them.	1 2 3 4 5
Support the development of more active travel routes (routes to walk, wheel and cycle) around Angus.	1 2 3 4 5
Make the most of funding opportunities and grants to the Third Sector and communities to support their services.	1 2 3 4 5
Work alone and with partners to preserve, re-establish, and increase and species of animals and plants native to Angus.	1 2 3 4 5
Use the box below to make comments about the above actions including if you think other actions are more important in caring for Angus as a place to live, work and visit.	