

Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment

This assessment has applied the interim guidance from Scottish Government available online at <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/03/6918/2>

Name of Proposal	Setting of the 2020/21 Budget and Council Tax
Lead Department/Service	Finance

What is the aim of the proposal?

The aim of the proposals at the Special Council meeting on 27 February 2020 is to meet the Council's statutory duty to:-

- Set the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2020/21
- Set the level of Band D Council Tax for 2020/21
- Set the General Fund 2019/2024 Financial Plan incorporating the 2020/21 Provisional Capital Budget.

Stage 1 – Planning – Is this proposal/decision strategically important or not?

Notes

The guidance reminds us that the duty is set at a strategic level – these are the key, high-level decisions that the public sector takes. Many of these decisions may be made in the context of public service reform and improving outcomes for people and communities. In general, they will be decisions that affect how the public body fulfils its intended purpose, over a significant period of time. It is likely that for Angus Council the decision would involve a Committee report.

The guidance offers some examples:

Preparation of the Local Development Plan	City deals or other major investment plans	Preparing legislation
Development of new strategic frameworks	Development of significant new policies or proposals	Preparation of an annual budget
Major* procurement exercises	Decisions about the shape, size and location of the estate	Preparing a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan as part of a CPP
Preparing locality plans	Preparation of a Corporate Plan	Commissioning of service

The decisions to be taken at the Special Council meeting are strategically important given the revenue and capital resources allocated will have significant influence over the manner of service delivery by the Council.

YES – Begin the Fairer Scotland assessment process during development of the proposal. Move to Stage 2.	NO – There is no requirement for a Fairer Scotland assessment. Move to Stage 5.
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Stage 2 – Evidence

What evidence do you have about socio-economic disadvantage and inequalities of outcome in relation to this issue or decision?

Is it possible to gather new evidence, involving communities of interest?

Notes

'**socio-economic disadvantage**' means living on a low income compared to others in Scotland, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services. Socio-economic disadvantage can

be experienced in both places and communities of interest, leading to further negative outcomes such as social exclusion.

Analysis informing the Local Outcome Improvement Plan and Corporate Plan indicates that child poverty and women's inequalities are issues for Angus Council to address. Health inequalities continue to present challenges for our older population, as well as those with disabilities albeit these are mainly addressed by the Angus Health & Social Care Partnership. We know that the communities in Arbroath experience challenges associated with deprivation although there are pockets of deprivation throughout Angus. This is particularly associated with inequality in these communities around income, employment and health.

Ongoing engagement is being undertaken with groups and communities to understand the nature of the socioeconomic impact arising from the proposals and any mitigating actions that may be available.



Stage 3 – Assessment and Improvement

In discussion, consider: What are the main impacts of the proposal? How could the proposal be improved so it reduces or further reduces inequalities of outcome?

The main aspects of the Setting of the 2020/24 Budget & Council Tax are:-

Change Programme

The aspect of the budget setting proposals which will have the most significant impact on people who already experience socioeconomic disadvantage will be those related to elements of the Council's Change Programme. This Programme very much focuses on efficiency and minimising the impact on front line services but does include some reduction in services or changes to how they are provided. It is likely that a small number of these proposals will have a negative impact on those families and people on: low incomes; those facing in-work poverty; receiving key benefits; and affected by the introduction of Universal Credit. Most of the budgets these groups rely on are being protected and in some cases enhanced through additional investment. The groups most likely to be affected are: lone parents; those with disabilities; and large families already experiencing poverty.

It is highlighted that each of the proposals within the Change Programme is subject to its own Equality Impact Assessment and thus is not separately addressed here.

Ongoing and One-off Investment

The Council will consider significant investment in services as part of the budget setting. The majority of these will have no direct impact onto those experiencing socio economic disadvantage, but a number will have a significant positive benefit, such as:-

- increased provision for residential care for children with complex needs;
- increased provision for Looked After Children;
- increased provision for the Angus Health & Social Care Integration Joint Board;
- an increase in Foster Carers allowances;
- continuing the pilot of provision of meals and activities to children in areas of deprivation during school holidays;
- Implementation of a 3 year Modern Apprenticeship programme.

It is envisaged that all these measures will have a positive impact on groups of citizens experiencing socio economic disadvantage.

Review of Charges

The Council will consider reviews of charges as part of the budget setting. Excluding charges related to adult services, which are proposed by the Angus Health and Social Care Partnership, it is noted that the proposals in this regard almost wholly concern charges to the business sector or for services where their use is discretionary. The proposals are for increases in accordance with inflation (Retail Price Index). It is not considered therefore that there will be a significant impact on citizens experiencing social economic disadvantage.

Council Tax Level

The Council Tax level will not be known until specific proposals are made at the Special Council meeting. There are a number of exemptions and discounts in relation to Council Tax which apply to those who are experiencing socio economic disadvantage and thus provide some relief for example, to those on benefits, e.g. unemployed people, etc. An increase in Council Tax will though have a detrimental impact on those experiencing socio economic disadvantage that are not eligible for relief. It is highlighted, however, that without the additional income generated through a Council Tax increase it may not be possible for many of the investment proposals noted above to be undertaken and existing budgets protected.

In overall terms, therefore, the implementation of a Council Tax increase is likely to have both a positive and negative impact on those who are experiencing social economic disadvantage by preserving essential services to those most in need but requiring those not eligible for full relief to pay slightly more.



Stage 4 – Decision

This stage is for an appropriate officer to confirm that due regard has been paid. They should be satisfied the body has understood the evidence, considered whether the policy can narrow inequalities of outcome, considered improvements and the links to socio-economic disadvantage and equality.

The officers named below consider that due regard has been paid by Angus Council to the impact onto inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when setting the 2020/21 Budget and Council Tax. It is highlighted that positive mitigating action is being undertaken in a number of areas to assist those who are experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage.

	Prepared By	Reviewed By:	Approved By:
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Post:	Service Lead (Finance)	Senior Practitioner (Equalities)	Director of Finance
Date:			