

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**19 MARCH 2020**

**LOCAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW – DEVELOPING AND TESTING PROPOSALS**

**REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG – DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report sets out information on upcoming activity related to the Local Governance Review, including COSLA prioritisation on developing and testing proposals and Angus Community Planning Partnership demand management work.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) Notes the information related to the Local Governance Review, Scottish Government and COSLA activity;
- (ii) Delegate authority to the Depute Chief Executive to develop a proposal with the Angus Community Planning Partnership to submit to Scottish Government and COSLA for consideration.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN/CORPORATE PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Locality Plans:

- an inclusive and sustainable economy
- a reduced carbon footprint
- attractive employment opportunities
- more opportunities for people to achieve success
- an enhanced, protected and enjoyed natural and built environment
- the best start in life for children
- safe, secure, vibrant and sustainable communities
- a skilled and adaptable workforce
- improved physical, mental and emotional health and well being

**3. BACKGROUND – THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

3.1 The Local Governance Review (LGR) was jointly launched in December 2017 by the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to consider how powers, responsibilities and resources are shared across national and local spheres of government, and with communities. There were two strands to the Review:

- (1) community level decision-making; and
- (2) public service governance.

3.2 Strand one of the review focused on communities and was called 'Democracy Matters'. There has been growing recognition that it is often better for decisions about the issues that affect different communities to be taken with more active involvement of those communities. This can mean communities in different geographical places organising at a very local level, or communities with a shared interest organising at a more regional level. This enables public services to work in ways which meet local circumstances and reflect the priorities of different communities.

- 3.3 At the same time as 'Democracy Matters', more than 40 public sector partners submitted proposals for alternative governance arrangements designed to improve outcomes for people and drive inclusive growth in the places they serve.
- 3.4 On 28 November 2019, the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Local Government and the COSLA President sent a letter to all public sector leaders updating them on the next phase of the Local Governance Review. The letter invited them to get involved in developing and testing ideas for alternative governance arrangements with the most transformative potential.
- 3.5 In 2020, the Democracy Matters conversations with communities will continue focusing on the future of local decision-making. It will challenge people and services to design new autonomous and democratically accountable decision-making bodies that work best for them. The second round of Democracy Matters conversations is scheduled to launch on 12 March 2020.

#### **4. COSLA DEVELOPING AND TESTING PROPOSALS WORK**

- 4.1 The public service governance conversation aimed to encourage all public sector partners to identify proposals for new models of local governance that empower communities and strengthen local democracy.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government believes that by fundamentally challenging whether traditional models of governance and associated service delivery are best placed to respond to local priorities, it is possible to identify ways to transform local democracy whilst driving improvement across public services.
- 4.3 The correspondence sent to local authorities on 28 November 2019, advised that the Scottish Government will use the remainder of this parliament to develop and test proposals with the greatest potential to improve outcomes.
- 4.4 The first round of engagement led to a better understanding of the type of changes that could make positive differences to people's lives. The work has identified three interconnected "empowerments":
- **Community empowerment** through a new relationship with public services, where communities have greater control over decisions.
  - **Functional empowerment** of public sector partners to better share resources and work together, and
  - **Fiscal empowerment** of democratic decision makers to deliver locally identified priorities.
- 4.5 There is an expectation that all public sector partners will engage constructively in local level discussions to further develop proposals with the most transformative potential. The Scottish Government and COSLA will then look to prioritise proposals and agree the nature and quantum of resource required to give each the best chance of success. Proposals that are not awarded "priority" status will remain part of the process with Scottish Government and COSLA providing input into their development on a case by case basis, where local partnerships would find that helpful.
- 4.6 To be part of the prioritisation process, the Local Governance Review Joint Programme Board are asking for proposals to be submitted by 27 March 2020. Submissions should demonstrate how they align with the three empowerments of fiscal, functional and community. Proposals need to state the planned outcomes; who is involved (partnerships/communities); how the proposal will be developed and tested; the cost/resource implications; and the timescales.

#### **5. ANGUS COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 The Angus Community Planning Partnership undertook a self-assessment exercise in 2019. The exercise identified seven themes along with areas for improvement including tasks and actions. Issues highlighted included a need to look at improved co-ordination of engagement and culture between partners, to build on the different skills that partners bring and to improve and take advantage of work already being undertaken.

- 5.2 A short life working group met on two occasions in late 2019 to progress this work. The group considered the need to empower frontline workers from different partner agencies, enabling them to work together in different ways and design services in collaboration with local people and the general public based on an understanding of 'lived experience'. Partners have contributed staff commitment and time allocation to achieve this.
- 5.3 The insight gained will help community planning partners to identify and address the root cause of problems, shifting from responding to issues/crisis to early intervention and avoiding poor outcomes and high costs later on. This aligns with the recommendations from the Christie Commission on the future of public services and will ultimately mean that insight will help to help shape the commissioning, design and delivery of services.
- 5.4 Angus Council has also recognised the importance of this approach by investing in further work to ensure the right service reaches the right resident when and where they need it, for the best cost and whilst focusing resources on those with most need. A budget of £470,000 over three years has been approved to support this work, [Report 83/20](#) refers. The budget will be used in the training and development of our frontline staff as well as supporting communities to work closely with us.
- 5.5 The Council and Community Planning Partnership proposal will examine how we work together as an integrated and interdependent system. It will focus on the relatively small number of Angus citizens who make significant demands on all public and third sector services. We will develop a different approach to the design, co-ordination and delivery of public services moving from responding to crisis to early intervention and prevention.
- 5.6 In doing so, the public and third sector in Angus will seek to empower communities through engagement, local decision making and an active role in the design and delivery of services in their community. This in turn will devolve fiscal power through mainstream participatory budgeting and alignment of resources.
- 5.7 The project scope will be defined and an approach set out in a proposal that will be submitted to Scottish Government and COSLA for consideration. This could secure further resource to develop and implement the approach in Angus.
- 5.8 All front line workers identified as being within the scope of the project (both geographically and thematically) will be brought together before the end of June 2020 to explore current working practices, identifying issues and barriers to effective partnership working. It is planned that in the first instance, the focus will be on Arbroath and one rural area to provide a contrast in subject and approach. Further work will be undertaken to explore innovative solutions over the summer with a second workshop to agree a test of change proposal in September 2020.
- 5.9 Implementation of the proposal will then take place from November 2020 with an initial evaluation of work planned to be undertaken in April 2021 with a view to wider implementation from late summer 2021.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 On 27 February 2020, Angus Council agreed a budget of £470,000 over three years to support a new way of working with people and communities. There are no financial implications to this report.

**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.

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