

ANGUS COUNCIL

SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE – 1 DECEMBER 2020

AUDIT SCOTLAND COVID-19 GUIDE FOR AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEES UPDATE

REPORT BY CATHIE WYLLIE – SERVICE LEADER (INTERNAL AUDIT)

ABSTRACT

This report provides information for Scrutiny and Audit Committee members in response to the issues raised in the Audit Scotland Covid-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees. This is the further report noted in Report 228/20 at the September 2020 Scrutiny and Audit Committee. The Audit Scotland report can be found at: <https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/covid-19-guide-for-audit-and-risk-committees>

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny and Audit Committee:

- (i) Note the information provided in Appendix 1, and
- (ii) Identify any areas where further information or action is considered to be required.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN (LOIP) AND COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 The contents of this report contribute to the achievement of the corporate priorities set out in the Council Plan. This is achieved through this report providing the Scrutiny & Audit Committee with information and assurance about council internal control systems, governance and risk management.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Audit Scotland published their Covid-19 Guide for Audit and Risk Committees on 25 August 2020. This was brought to members attention at the September committee meeting in Report 228/20. The guide explores Covid-19 related risk areas and suggests questions that elected members should be considering under the following headings:

- Internal controls and assurance
- Financial management and reporting
- Governance, and
- Risk management

4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Appendix 1 summarises the Council's position to date in relation to the questions raised by the Guide. Information has been provided by officers from across the Council. Where information has already been reported to Council or committees this has been referenced. Members of the Committee are asked to consider Appendix 1 and advise if further action or information is considered to be required at this time.

It is likely that the questions posed will continue to be relevant for committee members to consider further in future.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

NOTE: The following 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.

Reports to Scrutiny & Audit Committee:

August 2020

- 202/20 Internal Audit Activity Update
- 205/20 2019/20 Unaudited Annual Accounts

September 2020

- 229/20 Covid-19 Update to Annual Internal Audit Plan 2020-21

Reports to Council:

August 2020

- 188/20 2019/20 Financial Outturn and Draft Accounts Update
- 191/20 Humanitarian Assistance Angus Response Team (HAART) Update

September 2020

- 211/20 Proposed Revisions to the Council's 2020/21 General Fund Revenue Budget and Final Revenue Budget Documents
- 212/20 2020/21 Final Capital Budget – General Fund
- 214/20 Council Plan and Workforce Plan -Update
- 217/20 Covid-19 – Response, Recovery and Renewal
- 218/20 Recovery and Resilience – Update on Education Recovery
- 224/20 Angus Alive Update

REPORT AUTHOR: Cathie Wyllie, Service Leader – Internal Audit

EMAIL DETAILS: ChiefExec@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1: Angus Council position in relation to questions from the Audit Scotland August 2020 Covid-19 guide for audit and risk committees update

Appendix 1 Angus Council position in relation to questions from the Audit Scotland August 2020 Covid-19 guide for audit and risk committees update

Internal controls and assurance

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
What changes to internal controls have been required due to Covid-19?	The main changes have been where new processes have been introduced, e.g. Business Grants payments and the need for PPE, and generally around cyber security for home working. Further information on these examples is contained in answers to questions below. .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has internal audit assessed the design, implementation and operational effectiveness of revised internal controls? 	Internal Audit reported on review of new areas in Report 202/20 to the August 2020 S&A meeting. No concerns were raised, although higher inherent risk was recognised. The revised plan presented to S&A in Report 229/20 in September 2020 recognised the need to review systems for amended controls. This will be covered on an on-going basis as internal control audits are undertaken. Specific audits of cyber security, Business and other Covid-19 related grant payments, and PPE are planned or in progress.
What new controls have been established to account for the distribution of any additional funds received?	<p>Council guidance for distribution of various Covid-19 related grants was developed in services following available government guidance. Staff within the Council have liaised with groups at local and national level in developing the processes. On-line application processes were developed by the Council's IT team in conjunction with service-based staff. Processing of Business Grant applications was carried out by staff in the Revenues team, and self-employed and Bed & Breakfast grants by staff in Economic Development. New account codes were established to record transactions in the ledger.</p> <p>Arrangements for Food Fund spending were also developed using available government guidance. Reporting to Scottish Government on the spending has been undertaken as required.</p> <p>Internal Audit and Counter Fraud staff reviewed arrangements at a high level at various stages of development and this was reported to Scrutiny & Audit in the Internal Audit Activity Report 202/20 in August 2020. . Where applicable internal audit observations were acted on and no control issues were identified.</p> <p>Further work matching bank account numbers to known fraudulent activity nationwide is complete. A draft report has been issued and will be reported to the January 2021 Scrutiny & Audit Committee.</p> <p>New Covid-19 Financial Governance Guidance was issued to all staff to take account of Covid-19 impact and this is being kept under review by the Finance team and has been updated on a number of occasions as new national</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	funding streams and guidance are issued. The latest guidance can be found at https://anguscouncil.sharepoint.com/SitePages/Finance%20COVID-19-Related-Guidance.aspx
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have officers identified any weaknesses in new controls and if so, how are these being addressed? 	<p>Vigilance of managers should pick up issues and post-Covid reviews are being carried out across all services as part of recovery planning.</p> <p>There are no significant known weaknesses identified at present, but this position will be tested through the Internal Audit 2020/21 work plan.</p>
<p>To what extent has your organisation assessed the impact of working remotely on the control environment and working practices?</p>	<p>Assessment of control environment with regard to Digital Enablement and IT has been undertaken on a regular basis as an agenda item in regular Bronze/ IT Covid-19 planning meetings. This has included reviewing risk mitigation on any changes made for expediencies sake to enable review when the situation had stabilised.</p>
<p>Has internal audit reviewed their audit plan and assessed which projects might need to be cancelled, postponed or accelerated as your organisation navigates its way through the pandemic?</p>	<p>Yes – addressed in Report 229/20 to September 2020 S&A meeting.</p> <p>To date a number of projects are on hold, with several new pieces of work with a Covid-19 focus added. The position will be reviewed and reported to each S&A committee meeting.</p>
<p>How is management supporting internal audit to balance its 'routine' programme of work and that required to respond to Covid-19-related audit work?</p>	<p>With the exception of staff redeployed to the Council Emergency Centre, the Internal Audit team has not been required to undertake alternative work during the emergency. Directors and senior staff are liaising with audit staff to re-arrange work. Audit Staff have continued to have access to information when requested. The Director of STR&PSR liaises with CLT as required.</p>
<p>What impact has Covid-19 had on the annual reporting and accounting process?</p>	<p>2019/20 Draft accounts were submitted to Audit Scotland, our external auditors, by 30 June 2020 in line with normal statutory deadline. This was reported by the Director of Finance to S&A and Council in August 2020.</p> <p>Report 205/20 2019/20 Unaudited Annual Accounts to August 2020 S&A</p> <p>Report 188/20 2019/20 Financial Outturn and Draft Accounts Update to August 2020 Council</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has your organisation's timetable for the annual reporting process been considered for 2019/20 and 2020/21? If so, have the timetables been revised and updated accordingly? • Has the external auditor's annual audit plan been updated to assess and address new risks? 	<p>See item above and info below re 2019/20. No impact onto 2020/21 considered at present.</p> <p>The audited accounts would normally be approved for sign off by end September. External Audit informed us that they could not meet this timeframe for provision of their Report to Members / Audit Certificate due to staff resourcing issues associated with Covid-19. The Covid Bill allows deferral of the sign off date and notification has been placed on the Council's website that approval for sign off will now take place at 24th November S&A Committee.</p> <p>A revised plan covering more than timetable changes for concluding the audit has not been shared with the Council.</p>
<p>To what extent has your organisation considered work undertaken by other organisations (via professional networks and bodies), or where appropriate, engaged with external experts to inform decision-making around significant areas of change in response to the pandemic?</p>	<p>Members of CLT and other senior managers across the Council have engaged, and continue to engage, at Scottish and UK national level with professional peer groups and a number of Government and other groups in both formal and informal settings. These interactions allow practice to be shared, guidance to be developed and provide opportunities to both influence the national decision making process and be informed by it locally.</p> <p>One Director commented in response to this question "To be honest I doubt there has been a week since this started where we've not been in discussion with others – Councils, Government or COSLA on some aspect of the pandemic and our response. The joint working and sharing have been amazing and has demonstrated the strength in local government networks."</p> <p>Following are some of the engagements that are taking place.</p> <p>Children, Families and Justice In her role as CSWO and as convener of Social Work Scotland, the Director of Children, Families and Justice has had regular involvement with Scottish Government colleagues – especially the Office of the Chief Social Work Adviser (OCSWA). We have also had reference to the internal work of Social Work Scotland and the many multiagency meetings at a national level that have been attended to ensure that we both influence the national decision making processes and are informed by it locally.</p> <p>This has involved all of our guidance to staff, decisions about whether and what PPE for e.g. to put in place; which services to run; the relevance and applicability of guidance to specific settings; incorporating into local risk assessments; including advice from Sc. Govt., Care Inspectorate and SSSC, etc.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Education and Lifelong Learning This service liaised closely with –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADES – through Director’s meetings which allowed us to share practice. The ADES resources meeting allowed Beth to hear and share practice in relation to all operational matters. • Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate in relation to safely reopening our schools. • Colleagues across the Tay Regional Collaborative in order to discuss common responses and solutions • Trade Union representatives were informed/consulted where possible. <p>Also, we were supported by colleagues in safety, housing, communities and finance.</p> <p>Finance Finance has worked very closely with COSLA and through the Directors of Finance Section professional group to look at all aspects of the pandemic. This has covered a very wide range of issues including funding, assessment of financial impact using templates, policies in area such as key supplier support, policies on debt recovery, support for the administration of business support grants, etc. Revenues staff were part of the Government/COSLA/Council working group on business support grants which met weekly and discussed and shared draft guidance before it was issued. The Director of Finance was part of a COSLA Key Supplier working group with other Finance Directors where they shared and discussed various issues connected with Government guidance and our approach to paying suppliers – this has been invaluable. We’ve also looked at schemes and practice in England in areas such as the Income Loss Compensation Scheme. We also fed into other national groups e.g. the Education Recovery Resources Group.</p> <p>HR Due to the nature of the common challenges and changes to legislation that face HR services within local authorities we already have robust arrangements in place for networking with professional colleagues in other local authorities across Scotland via the SPDS network and our participation in portfolio groups. This has been no different in relation to our response to the pandemic, and in particular across the Tayside area where we have worked closely with neighbouring local authorities, Tayside Contracts and the NHS where appropriate to try to achieve consistency in policy changes being put in place during the course of the pandemic. We have also engaged as necessary with COSLA, the trade unions and colleagues in the Health & Safety arena to ensure compliance with national guidance.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Infrastructure</p> <p>Throughout the pandemic we have worked with and been informed by partners, notably the NHS and particularly public health, and with wider Scottish Government input, in forecasting and scenario planning for the impact of Covid. The LRP/LARGS/Test & Protect groups, etc. have been fundamental in this. Perhaps as an example, in our preparation for return to school, our school transport was planned based on 2m social distancing in accordance with Government guidelines, until those guidelines changed and we re-planned our school transport accordingly.</p> <p>In a further example of sharing nationally, the approach to building construction, roads maintenance and ventilation of the buildings we have re-opened, have been the subject of experience and guidance sharing across local authorities through the Society of Heads of Property Scotland (SHOPS) and the Society of Chief Officers for Transportation in Scotland (SCOTS), This mutual sharing of approaches has informed our classification of essential work during lockdown and our recovery planning.</p> <p>Internal Audit</p> <p>SLACIAG (Scottish Local Authority Chief Internal Auditors' Group) informal engagement and formal meetings, and UK wide HIA (Heads of Internal Audit) meetings arranged through the Institute of Internal Auditors. These discussions have confirmed and informed initial audit activity to respond to the pandemic and the revision of the work planned for 2020/21.</p> <p>Scottish Government Cyber Resilience Bulletins have been shared using Yammer. Counter fraud information has been received through SLAIG, NAFN, Police Scotland, Scottish Government, Cabinet Office and other councils, and shared externally with SLAIG & Police Scotland, and internally with Revenues but also Trading Standards, Comms, Emergency Centre, Ec. Dev., CLT, Payroll and Procurement.</p> <p>IT</p> <p>Due to the nature of constant, significant change and innovation taking place in the IT world, Angus Council's Digital Enablement and IT service regularly liaises and works with suppliers, other councils and public and private sector bodies to inform direction and decision making. In response to the pandemic we have worked with neighbouring councils and NHS on implementation and rollout of O365 and its application to improve remote working, collaboration and how to better support council meetings. We have engaged on an ongoing basis with professional bodies such as Society of Information Technology Management (SOCITM) and Cyber Security Information Sharing Partnership (CiPS) with regard to process automation and security respectively and the Digital Office in Scotland have provided support on Cyber security matters.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Legal and Democratic services SOLAR (The Society of Local Authority Lawyers & Administrators in Scotland) has been hugely beneficial through various working groups and the Executive. For example, SOLAR assisted in relation to the Coronavirus Key Supplier Support Scheme through joint meetings of local authorities sharing experience of how they were implementing their schemes. The SOLAR Executive and Monitoring Officer groups has also shared experience of the different governance arrangements that have been put in place at local authorities to deal with Council and Committee business remotely. There is also a Licensing group where approaches of local authorities to fees and extensions to licences has also been shared, and a Governance Group which has been beneficial in sharing information of what other local authorities are doing in relation to remote meetings. All of this has been invaluable.</p> <p>SOLAR also sought views from all local authorities on proposed new Coronavirus legislation and this was submitted to the Scottish Government. We took part in that.</p> <p>The Law Society of Scotland and Registers of Scotland have also provided advice to solicitors on Covid issues:</p> <p>https://www.lawscot.org.uk/news-and-events/law-society-news/coronavirus-updates/ https://www.ros.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19</p> <p>Risk, Resilience and Health & Safety Partnership has been integral to our response to the pandemic. This has been achieved through weekly and monthly meetings with the resilience partnerships, locally, regionally and nationally. Partners including health, emergency services, NHS, Third sector, Local Authorities, etc. Our preparedness, plans, training and exercising are all integral to how we work together to respond.</p> <p>Community Planning partnership has also been integrated through the resilience partnership process.</p> <p>Through national bodies such as COSLA and Solace has supported, a range of topics, views and communication, through various committees and leads.</p> <p>Specialist bodies, such as the Emergency Planning Society, Institute of Environmental Health, Social Work Scotland.</p> <p>The role of public health continues to be critical in terms of support, advice and guidance.</p> <p>Work on planning for Additional Deaths was heavily influenced by Scottish Government modelling. Significant input from Dundee University, Professor of Pathology, Funeral Directors, and National ADOG (Additional Deaths Oversight Group). As Chair of Emergency Planning Society, (the UK Professional Body for those working</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>in resilience) our Manager, Risk, Resilience & Safety fed in lots of useful academic and professional insights and there was input from both Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) and Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP).</p> <p>In regard to health and safety there are several organisation and governing bodies which we have been following to consider their work undertaken since the pandemic started. In regard to H&S and public health we have followed: (HSE) Health and Safety Executive, (IOSH) Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, Public Health Scotland, (NHS) National Health service, and (HPS) Health Protection Scotland. In regard to building ventilation we have followed the advice of the (CIBSE) Chartered institution of Building Services Engineers, The (BESA) Building Engineering Services Association and (REHVA)</p> <p>Guidance provided by Scotland Excel assisted with the purchase of PPE. The H & S team have also worked with other authorities and the HSE (Health and Safety executive) when pulling together advice on PPE and completion of risk assessments.</p> <p>Trading Standards and Environmental Health involvement with the joint national expert group on Trading Standards and Environmental Health. The group has had a remit to produce guidance on emerging issues related to Covid. There has also been liaison with Food Standards Scotland, HSE and the Local NHS Health Protection Team which has guided decision making. There is also one of our officers on the national CTSI (Chartered Trading Standards Institute) cyber security group so we are able to use the national information to inform our response to scams in the area.</p> <p>Waste We have used guidance produced by the Waste Industry Safety and Health (WISH) forum to significantly assist our response in terms of waste management.</p> <p>We have participated in weekly questionnaires carried out by the Scottish Local Authorities Waste Managers Network (WMN) and have received the results. We are on the email circulation list for the WMN and have also benefited from questions and answers raised by email.</p> <p>We have benefited from being part of UK wide APSE networks for transport management, Parks and grounds maintenance, burial services and waste management. This has included being part of WhatsApp groups which allowed for easy exchange of information.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<p>How have IT services performed during the pandemic?</p>	<p>The IT services have performed extremely well and allowed the council to continue to carry out all services as prioritised by the governance in place. The preparation already carried out within IT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to enable Agile working across a number of Council and non-council locations including working at home • to redesign and digitise business and customer facing processes • the move to remote hosting • the investment in end user equipment and • the ongoing infrastructure resilience, implementation and testing <p>has meant Angus Council IT has proved a significant, robust and performant enabler of the Council response to COVID.</p> <p>All IT services as per the IT Service catalogue have remained available during the pandemic and new services are being introduced weekly as required including for example automated forms for new grant processing, new services to support remote working.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have cyber security controls been considered? 	<p>Cyber Security Controls - Pandemic Considerations</p> <p>Our devices and access to corporate systems already had good security controls. All laptops are disk encrypted and the security software and controls which are applied to them meet with PSN accreditation and NCSC guidelines. While the volume and speed of laptop deployment has increased significantly as a result of the pandemic, we have ensured that all machines are issued to the same standard as prior to the pandemic despite the rush to deploy.</p> <p>Access to our Citrix environment is controlled by 2FA authentication and we have ensured there are restrictions in place on what people can and cannot download to personal devices.</p> <p>On top of the controls we already have in place we have given particular consideration to the security of our data on the cloud by purchasing and implementing a CASB solution and new MFA platform. As the situation shows no sign of ending any time soon this will allow more flexibility with regard to the types of devices and from where users will be able to access cloud hosted data going forward.</p> <p>We have been able to maintain our level of monitoring and control over our network and firewalls. Email filtering rules and controls have been monitored to ensure our systems are dealing with pandemic related spam, etc.</p> <p>We have had to in some cases slightly relax web and application controls to a degree in order to allow critical services to carry out their day to day duties. This has included opening up some websites which were controlled to enable video conferencing and allowed some access to mobile applications which were previously blocked on devices for the same reason. The medium to long term plan is to remove this access and migrate the services onto corporately managed and controlled systems.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<p>To what extent has management assessed the impact of Covid-19 on overall staff capacity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What areas have been identified as being under resourced and how is this being addressed? 	<p>This has been reviewed and managed within services and is discussed at the weekly IMT/Silver meetings. Issues are escalated to the Gold group as they arise, and appropriate solutions sought. Current areas of pressure include Procurement, the contact centre and the emergency centre.</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Resourcing of procurement support to services across the Council and in particular the Angus Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) was a challenge prior to pandemic due to a mismatch between work requiring support and the staff resources available to provide that support. The pandemic has made a difficult situation worse and has placed significant strain on our small procurement team. The processing of Key Supplier Support Payment applications has been and remains a very significant task especially for those suppliers providing care service to the AHSCP. Additional agency staff are being brought in on a temporary basis to try to manage this workload and all but essential other work has had to be postponed.</p> <p>Contact Centre</p> <p>The Contact Centre was central to the delivery of the HAART response and this largely took operators away from business as usual to allow them to concentrate on their allocated responsibilities in relation to HAART. Having to provide cover for longer periods into evenings and weekends meant that we had to rely on the goodwill of staff to alter their working arrangements to accommodate this. We also had to supplement the available resource with colleagues from ANGUSalive who would otherwise have been furloughed in order to increase capacity. This is likely to continue to be an issue throughout the winter months, with the Contact Centre now being asked to support Contact Tracing arrangements.</p> <p>Emergency Centre</p> <p>A working group is currently assessing the longer term needs for this.</p> <p>HSCP winter planning and re-mobilisation</p> <p>In March 2020, CFJ undertook specific mapping of available capacity within the service to re-staff residential and other critical services and are refreshing that work now. The initial work led to recruitment activity early in the endemic to boost the availability of suitably qualified staff.</p>
<p>What is your organisation doing to support its staff during the pandemic?</p>	<p>The most significant change for a large number of staff has been the requirement to work from home with little or no notice. Working practices have had to be adapted to accommodate this, including the introduction of some digital</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have workload and working practices been adjusted to allow for the challenges that people may face when working remotely? 	<p>processes which had to be developed and introduced very quickly to ensure service delivery could continue. It was acknowledged during the lockdown period, and whilst the schools remained closed, that this placed increased pressure on employees who were also having to cope with caring responsibilities and supporting children with schoolwork whilst at the same time trying to work. The messaging around this was clear in that employees should do the work that they were able to do, but that allowances would be made to take account of the other demands on their time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What guidance, advice or signposting has your organisation put in place to support staff wellbeing? 	<p>Throughout the course of the pandemic the Council has had arrangements in place to address employee wellbeing through the Covid-19 Staff Information Hub and also via 'You Matter' where a number of topics have been covered. Help and support has also been made available through the Yammer Covid-19 Forum and on the Yammer Personal Resilience and Wellbeing Forum. Information has been made available to staff on the support which can be accessed through People Asset Management, our occupational health provider. A HIVE survey of those working from home and a series of staff engagement sessions have also taken place to allow employees to share their views/concerns.</p>
<p>What opportunities and risks have arisen as staff are deployed across departments?</p>	<p>Risks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Staff not following government measures pertaining to home life following restrictions and protocols to staying safe and protecting others. Also not following control measures as required in the Covid-19 secure risk assessment. Resulting in coming to work as suspected or confirmed Covid-19 and putting others at risk in the workplace. In particular those who are vulnerable and are required to complete the individual risk assessment tool as required by the Scottish Government for all employees returning to work after shielding, those with Covid-19 restrictions, those who are going to a workplace from home working, those with anxieties about returning to work. Links have also been promoted to the nationally development H&SC workforce supports available as they have been rolled out. Following the Governments route map as it is approved through each step does not ensure safety in the workplace. Risks have arisen where a Covid-19 secure risk assessment has not been completed, approved, consulted, agreed or following a consistent approach. We have put steps in place to ensure that staff are safely returning to work if essential through various working groups such as HR/Trade unions and a property recovery group. As staff have been working from home some have become anxious for various reasons, not having the workstation needs at home, missing colleagues, unable or finding it difficult to communicate using non-traditional means, wellbeing issues.

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. With Covid-19 it has brought about many anxieties, particularly for those who must work close together or with service users. 6. As the Covid-19 impact has gone on it has highlighted the impact on some services, particularly those recognised as key workers, or those who need to provide a frontline service to the public either face to face or through online or access line. Some services have been impacted by staffing, or IT, or just through the additional controls required which has impacted on reorganisation of teams and equipment to be able to deliver an expected service. 7. Our occupational health and health surveillance are not carrying out face to face meetings. They are talking with employees online and conducting triaged care which may impact on the speed of recovery. 8. Induction and training have been impacted where there is a risk of social distancing not being followed for activities such as driving, manual handling inanimate and animate loads. 9. Activities where 2 metres social/physical distancing is impacted such as face to face meetings, manual handling and travelling in vehicles. <p>Opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaboration with other local authorities and partners has improved. 2. Consultation and relationships have significantly improved with trade unions and some other services in the council. 3. MS Teams has become a new way of working and meeting safely. It has shown that face to face meetings are not always required. This has reduced travelling times and burdens on roads and parking allowing for people to perhaps use that time to become more efficient in their time management. 4. A recognition that we can work differently using technology and less physical spaces. 5. An improvement to our corporate governance in regard to a consistent approach and centralised overview of our risk assessments. 6. Considering other ways to induct our employees and train them through use of technology.
<p>How is your organisation capturing the learning and opportunities that arise from new ways of working?</p>	<p>To capture the learning from the new ways of working, we are taking a 3 strand approach:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Undertaking regular (quarterly) HIVE pulse surveys of the workforce. These are short, focussed online surveys which we use to gather data on current and emerging issues. Previous surveys since March have focussed on employee wellbeing and returning to the office. The latest wellbeing survey was undertaken in November 2020. 2. Engagement Sessions – Following each HIVE pulse survey, 10 (approx.) engagement sessions (1per directorate plus 2 open sessions) have been held. Led by Directors, these seek to better understand the HIVE results and gather further feedback from colleagues.

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Discussion sessions have been held at leadership forum (fortnightly between June and Sept, monthly from October) and middle manager's forum (monthly) which focussed on gathering feedback around specific topics. These included identifying key successes and challenges since the start of the pandemic, considering our future priorities in light of the current circumstances and thinking about returning to the office/the future of agile working.</p> <p>An additional monthly managers' forum has been added for first level leaders to ensure their feedback is also gathered.</p> <p>Information from all of these sessions is collated and shared with relevant recovery groups, including Strategic Recovery Group, the Property Recovery group and the Communication & Engagement group to inform planning and decision making.</p> <p>3. Good Practice Forum – this is a new initiative being set up specifically to provide an opportunity for championing and learning from projects across professional boundaries, understanding what works in a local context and identifying creative and innovative actions that best fit local needs.</p>

Financial management and reporting

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<p>Is financial (and performance) information received in a timely manner, with sufficient detail, to inform the fast-paced changes that are required due to Covid-19?</p>	<p>Regular updates have been provided to Council and the Special Arrangements Committee at every meeting since March 2020, making clear the significant impact both in the current financial year and beyond. Revised 2020/21 General Fund revenue budget and capital plan were approved at the Council meeting on 10 September 2020 (Report 211/20 and 212/20 refer respectively).</p>
<p>How is management assessing the financial impact of Covid-19 on income and expenditure?</p>	<p>This is covered in the revised budget report to September 2020 Council (R211/20). The revenue and capital budgets are now being reported on through regular cycle of monitoring reports to Policy & Resources and Communities Committees (for Housing Budgets)</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What processes or procedures have been put in place to assess, for example, new demands, new expenditure streams, savings from activity foregone and lost income? 	<p>This was done as part of budget revision activity and recovery planning and will remain under review in the months ahead</p>
<p>What information has been used in determining the value of assets and liabilities?</p>	<p>In terms of balance sheet valuation, we have used appointed valuers to undertake this as part of the normal 5 yearly cycle. Specific queries on asset valuations have arisen as part of this year's audit process and we expect this to be covered in the external audit Report to Members.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have estimated valuations been impacted by Covid-19, for example, disruption to the revaluation of properties or market volatility impacting on investments? 	<p>There has been limited impact as evident through the Balance Sheet movement between 2018/19 and 2019/20. Estimation risks due to Covid-19 are though highlighted by both property and pension valuers.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the likely impact of Covid-19 on pension deficits and what does this mean for your organisation? 	<p>There has been limited impact onto the pension deficit. In any case, any impact onto the council would be assessed as part of the triennial assessment and not in relation to year on year fluctuations.</p>
<p>What commitments and guarantees have been made to third parties, and how are these being monitored?</p>	<p>The Council has agreed a financial support package of its ALEO (ANGUSalve) which was approved by Council on 10 September 2020. The Council is also providing support to suppliers including Tayside Contracts through its Key Supplier Support arrangements which were agreed through the Special Arrangements Committee.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where relevant, how is your organisation ensuring that the impacts of the pandemic on its arm's-length external organisations (ALEOs) are being appropriately monitored? 	<p>The team within the Governance Service with responsibility for liaison with and monitoring of ANGUSalve activity has adapted its activity to consider the impact of Covid-19. In addition, financial aspects have been addressed through the Director of Finance.</p> <p>ANGUSalve Report 224/20 to the Council on 10 September 2020 provided "an update in relation to ANGUSalve, the Council's Arms-Length External Organisation (ALEO), following the suspension of the delivery of the services specification during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also sets out the emerging issues as a result of the pandemic on the ANGUSalve business model and outlines the next steps as the organisation moves through the recovery phases and, in partnership with the Council, progresses to develop proposals for transformational change required to achieve a</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>sustainable future. This response also aligns with the significant savings which are already committed to be delivered by ANGUSalive over the current 3-year Finance & Change Plan period and COVID-19 has accelerated the requirement to commence that transformational change process.”</p> <p>Tayside Contracts TC also being engaged with reporting to Council in September</p>
What impact has Covid-19 had on savings plans?	Covered in 2020/21 budget update report R211/20 to September 2020 Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is your organisation on track to deliver these savings and if not, what plans are your organisation putting in place to help with this? 	Covered in the 2020/21 budget update report. Impact onto future years also being assessed as part of 2021/22 budget planning
What impact has Covid-19 had on transformational activity?	Covered in 2020/21 budget update report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If there has been or will be significant delays to activity or a failure to meet savings targets, what are the financial implications and how is management preparing for this? 	Covered in the 2020/21 budget update report – there has been a significant impact on timing and capacity to deliver transformational change but good progress has still been made in most areas
Is there sufficient capacity within the finance team to deal with competing pressures, such as preparing annual accounts, at a time when working practices are having to be adapted due to Covid-19?	<p>2019/20 Draft accounts were submitted to Audit Scotland, our external auditors, by 30 June 2020 in line with normal statutory deadline. This was reported by the Director of Finance to S&A and Council in August 2020. Report 205/20 2019/20 Unaudited Annual Accounts to August 2020 S&A Report 188/20 2019/20 Financial Outturn and Draft Accounts Update to August 2020 Council</p> <p>Notwithstanding the achievement of the unaudited accounts deadline the finance department has been reviewing its capacity and resilience. A benchmarking project with other Scottish local authorities was underway in early 2020, with support from Internal Audit. This project stalled due to Covid-19. The scope needs to be reviewed to take account of new demands on finance staff as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Progress on this will be reported in the Internal Audit activity report to each Scrutiny and Audit committee meeting.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Finance team capacity in some areas were giving cause for concern before Covid-19 and the pandemic has made that position worse. Some work has been re-prioritised within the service to seek to accommodate the extra demands arising from Covid-19 but a number of less urgent pieces of work have had to be deferred to make this possible. This reprioritisation has generally been successful but there are significant pressures on the finance team supporting ANGUSalive and the Angus Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP). AHSCP have raised concerns about the lack of finance team capacity to support them in their work but there are no easy solutions to this in the short term.</p> <p>Procurement is another area where there is a significant mismatch between the staffing and capacity available and the workload which the team are being asked to deliver, a position made worse by the pandemic. We are looking to provide additional temporary resource to alleviate this via agency staff but this will only reduce the backlog not address the capacity issues.</p>

Governance

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<p>What impact has Covid-19 had on governance arrangements?</p>	<p>Council meetings on 3 April and 12 August addressed Covid-19 emergency revised governance arrangements.</p> <p>Interim scheme of delegation reflecting the changes agreed on 3 April was issued to officers on 24 April.</p> <p>Summary of Decision making Arrangements</p> <p>A special Meeting of full Council took place via Zoom on 3rd April to agree a series of interim measures in relation to decision making to ensure democratic accountability during the lockdown period and member involvement in decision-making, albeit with smaller committees. This was the first remote meeting held by a local authority in Scotland.</p> <p>Two special committees were established, the Special Education Committee and the Special Arrangements Committee and interim Standing Orders were approved. The Special Arrangements Committee met three times. Regulatory Committee meetings also took place over this period again using Zoom.</p> <p>A decision was taken in June that meetings of all service committees resume in Sept.</p> <p>A full cycle of meetings has now taken place.</p> <p>Live streaming of meetings to the public is to commence in w/c 19th Oct A review of the arrangements will take place in Dec 2020.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	<p>Remote Meetings Yes, via Zoom</p> <p>Public Participation The Press has always been able to access the live meetings remotely. Regulatory meetings have had applicants/objectors address the meeting remotely. Several Placing Requests involving parents have taken place remotely. Deputations are still taking place and access is provided for that particular item of business. Police Scotland and Fire Service have also participated at meetings using dial in.</p> <p>Committee meetings are now being live streamed</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is your organisation ensuring that effective oversight and scrutiny of key decisions is maintained as it responds rapidly to the challenges it faces during the pandemic? 	<p>Use of emergency delegated powers was reported to committee or Council.</p> <p>With the exception of the March 2020 S&A committee meeting all other S&A meetings have taken place as scheduled. One additional meeting scheduled to consider final 2019/20 accounts.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have any significant changes been made to governance arrangements due to the pandemic, for example, suspension of committees or increased use of delegated decision-making powers? 	<p>See above re 3 April 2020 Council meeting. Special committee created to deal with urgent business, some committees did not meet, and Directors were given emergency delegated powers. In August 2020 governance arrangements reverted back to pre-Covid-19 position although meetings remain virtual rather than face to face.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where decisions are being made using delegated or emergency powers, how are these being recorded, made public and subjected to scrutiny by the relevant committee(s)? 	<p>August 2020 Report 202/20 Internal Audit Activity Update included reporting of an Internal Audit review of the Use of Delegated Powers in the period up to July 2020. The overall assessment was Comprehensive Assurance that there is good governance in the emergency delegated powers process.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have changes to processes and procedures made in response to Covid-19 been reviewed and documented appropriately to comply with overall governance arrangements? 	<p>Interim Scheme of Delegation and Internal Audit review noted above confirm this. Review and changes to HR policies are documented.</p>
<p>Are governance arrangements being reviewed regularly to ensure they remain fit for purpose?</p>	<p>Policies reviewed and adapted, governance arrangements maintained in circumstances. Gold and Silver oversight, with daily meetings at the height of the response. CGOG maintaining an overview of all arrangements.</p>
<p>Are non-executive directors providing appropriate levels of support, scrutiny and challenge to your organisation as it responds to the current environment and new risks?</p>	<p>This is not relevant to the Council but would be for ANGUSalive.</p>
<p>What barriers, if any, have affected your organisation's ability to continue to provide services for individuals and communities during the pandemic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have these barriers been overcome? What was the impact on service users? 	<p>Gold, Silver and Bronze incident management teams have overseen the pandemic response and co-ordinated with each other, external agencies and partners. This has allowed all service areas in the Council to work together.</p> <p>Management fora have also been used to allow services to share experiences and solutions.</p> <p>A number of reports were taken at the Council meeting on 10 September 2020 which include information on how we have responded to the crisis and the impact on service users. In particular Report 217/20 Covid-19 – Response, Recovery and Renewal provided members with an overview on Angus Council's response to the Covid-19 pandemic service by service, including cross referencing to previous relevant reports. It also notes "Rather than create a separate recovery and renewal plan for Angus Council, we have updated the Council Plan and the Workforce Plan to take account of the impact of the pandemic. Each plan is on the agenda today for consideration and approval by members, (R214/20). In addition, a report on the Capital and Revenue budget position is on the agenda today for consideration by members. (R212/20)."</p> <p>Other relevant reports to the council include: Report 218/20 Recovery and Resilience – Update on Education Recovery to Council on 10 September 2020</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	.
<p>What impact has Covid-19 had on your organisation achieving its stated objectives?</p>	<p>The Council Plan strategic direction, vision, and related priorities and actions have been updated as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This was reported to Council on 10 September 2020 in Report 214/20</p> <p>Report 191/20 HAART response update to August 2020 Council.</p> <p>There has been a focus on accelerating performance dashboard.</p> <p>The development of the pandemic and prioritising work on this, caused a pausing of improvement activity on the Performance-Led council programme. There is a stated priority of Angus Council to become Performance-Led and the programme was initiated in October 2019 to ensure all services are complying with their performance duties and contributing to a consistent approach on performance management. Therefore the impact of Covid-19 is a delay in progressing this work and a lack of attention on this improvement work by services. The intention was to complete Stages 1 and 2 of the programme by December 2020, but this has been pushed back to March 2021, with a refreshed programme re-starting in Date TBC.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does performance reporting highlight any changes on your organisation's ability to meet its objectives as a consequence of Covid-19? 	<p>Revised Council plan reported to Council September 2020 in Report 214/20</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has the pandemic caused new risks to achieving your organisation's objectives? If so, how are these being addressed? 	<p>A full review of the Corporate Risk Register has been undertaken, with COVID and Recovery being added. In addition a review of all other risks, alongside business continuity plans has been completed. A risk management report will be submitted to the January S&A meeting</p>
<p>What impact has Covid-19 had on collaborative working?</p>	<p>The general consensus, demonstrated throughout this report, is that there has been a positive impact on collaborative working internally and externally, both in terms of strengthening existing connections, and in building new ones to deal with emerging needs.</p>

Risk management

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
<p>Are there new expenditure or procurement streams, or delivery methods arising from Covid-19 that introduce new risk?</p>	<p>Yes, there are. These will be addressed by services and procurement.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What indicators does management have to support informed decisions on risk and is this data available in real time? 	<p>We are documenting risks through the incident management process, and identifying where further actions/decisions need to be taken. This is available through the Raven system, and also on the action log at each meeting.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your organisation's risk management strategy up-to-date to include risks associated with Covid-19? 	<p>Risk management strategy was last approved at Policy & Resources committee in January 2019 – Report 27/19 A Covid Risk has been added and is being monitored.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What risks have emerged that need to be addressed and what protocols are in place to report and analyse emerging risks as the situation evolves? 	<p>The Council Emergency Centre was activated at the outset of the pandemic. This is the main co-ordination hub within the Council, and supports the various incident management functions and associated sub-groups.</p> <p>Decisions are made based on real time data, analysis of current position and what might occur and interdependencies. Important that any decisions we make are logged with the rationale to ensure we have evidence of why a specific decision was made and when.</p> <p>Our structures are all interlinked from Bronze, Silver, Gold, aligned to the resilience partnership and to Scottish Government.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are risks being reported to the relevant committee? 	<p>Much of the risks captured have been dealt with operationally. There have also been reports to full Council, outlining the response and implications. Risk management is reported to CLT monthly and to Scrutiny and Audit at least twice per year.</p>
<p>Has your organisation's risk register been updated to reflect new risks arising from Covid-19?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	Updated in July 2020 to review scoring and add new risks. The review of risks is ongoing given the dynamic nature of Covid. Monthly report to CLT. Risks also raised weekly via IMT.
<p>Is there a need for management's risk appetite framework to be reviewed to ensure it is appropriate in this rapidly evolving environment?</p>	<p>Due to the pause in the PLED programme this has had an impact on the performance management risk that sits on the Corporate Risk Register. The risk was assessed on 21/09/2020 and increased due to current climate and loss of progress. The intended reboot of the programme next month should address this with the next assessment due in December 2020. There is a separate risk register for the PLED programme that will be monitored closely to prevent any further slippage.</p> <p>In addition we are continually reviewing the current position, against longer term council plan and priorities to ensure that demands are considered fully and aligned to the current and future landscapes.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If so, when will the committee be informed of the outcome and any next steps? 	<p>The impact of Covid 19 should not be underestimated. There will be ongoing monitoring and review of current response, transition to stabilise and into recovery. This will be an ongoing process and reports will be submitted to relevant committees in 2021. Recovery from the pandemic will take years and we will continue to see issues in terms of outbreaks for months to come.</p>
<p>How does Covid-19 impact on any financial risks already facing your organisation and how does this affect short, medium and long-term financial plans?</p>	<p>Director of Finance is addressing this. Report 211/20 for Council on 10 September 2020 proposed revisions to the Council's 2020/21 General Fund Revenue Budget and final revenue budget documents. Report 212/20 to the same Council meeting dealt with the 2020/21 Final Capital Budget.</p> <p>Financial Sustainability is Risk 01 in the Corporate Risk Register. This has been reviewed for Covid-19 impact and overall risk scoring increased from 16 to 20. Covid-19 sub-risks have been identified and scored for all Corporate risks.</p> <p>An updated Medium Term Budget Strategy (MTBS) will be presented to the 2021/22 Council Tax setting meeting in February 2021. While the 2021/22 budget will seek to take account of the prevailing impact of Covid-19 for the next financial year, it is envisaged that there will still be a lack of clarity of the medium to long term financial impact to inform the MTBS.</p> <p>The absence of financial planning information at a national level is a significant hinderance to the Council in its attempts to develop a medium-term budget strategy. The Council relies on Government Grant for around 80% of its revenue funding so budget strategies can vary significantly depending on the grant position once known. At the time</p>

Audit Scotland questions	Angus Council position
	of writing it is expected that a Scottish Budget will not be published until February 2021, i.e. only 3 weeks before the Council is due to set its budget and Council Tax for financial year 2021/22.
<p>What impact does Covid-19 have on any scenario planning that your organisation has in place for events such as EU withdrawal and increasing budget uncertainty?</p>	<p>We are reviewing concurrent risks at present and assessing the potential impact.</p> <p>EU withdrawal Reasonable worst case scenario (RWCS) planning has been undertaken over the last two years with regard to EU Exit. This has been undertaken from an Angus perspective, and also that of the wider partnerships. Currently work being undertaken to return an updated position on recently issued RWCS by end of October.</p> <p>Budget Uncertainty The Director of Finance is keeping an overview of emerging issues affecting the budget and factoring these into on-going budget review and scenario planning. Reports 211/20 and 212/20 to Council on 10 September 2020 discussed the revised 2020/21 General Fund revenue budget and capital plan respectively.</p> <p>Tay Cities Deal Work continues to progress through the Joint Committee and Management group to reach deal sign off. This will be a critical element to support economic growth following the pandemic bringing investment and much needed jobs and training opportunities in Angus.</p>