

Angus Special Council

4 March 2021

Equality Impact Assessment & Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment – Overall Revenue & Capital Budget
2021/22



Equality Impact and Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment Form

Step 1

Name of Proposal Setting of the 2021/22 General Fund Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax

It should be noted that this assessment covers all of the Special Angus Council agenda items (including any alternative budget proposals). In this regard, it is highlighted that any proposals on the agenda which are at variance from those within the Administration's proposed budget are not considered to have any impact in relation to the 'protected characteristics'.

Step 2

Is this only a **screening** Equality Impact Assessment Yes/No

(A) If Yes, please choose from the following options **all** reasons why a full EIA/FSD is not required:

(i) It does not impact on people Yes/No

(ii) It is a percentage increase in fees which has no differential impact on protected characteristics Yes/No

(iii) It is for information only Yes/No

(iv) It is reflective e.g. of budget spend over a financial year Yes/No

(v) It is technical Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of points above, please go to **Step 16**, and sign off the Assessment.

(B) If you have answered No to the above, please indicate the following:

Is this a full Equality Impact Assessment	Yes/ No
Is this a Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment	Yes/ No

If you have answered Yes to either or both of the above, continue with Step 3.

If your proposal is a **strategy** please ensure you complete Step 13 which is the Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment.

Step 3

(i) Lead Directorate / Service: Finance

(ii) Are there any **relevant** statutory requirements affecting this proposal? Yes
If so, please describe.

It is a statutory requirement for the Council to set the Council Tax for the forthcoming financial year by 10 March. An inherent part of setting the Council Tax is the approval of related revenue and capital budgets.

(iii) What is the aim of the proposal? Please give full details.

The aim of the proposals at the Special Council meeting on 4 March 2021 is to:-

- Agree updated versions of the Council Plan, Finance & Change Plan and Workforce Plan
- Set the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2021/22
- Set the level of Band D Council Tax for 2021/22
- Set the General Fund 2020/2025 Capital Plan incorporating the 2021/22 Provisional Capital Budget.

(iv) Is it a new proposal? ~~Yes~~/No Please indicate OR

Is it a review of e.g. an existing budget saving, report, strategy, policy, service review, procedure or function? ~~Yes~~/No Please indicate

Annual review of the Council Plan and related documents plus the Council's Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax Charge.

Step 4: Which people does your proposal involve or have consequences for?

Please indicate all which apply:

Employees	Yes/ No
Job Applicants	Yes/ No
Service users	Yes/ No
Members of the public	Yes/ No

Step 5: List the evidence/data/research that has been used in this assessment (links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance). This could include:

Internal data: Financial data held in the Council's corporate financial management system and other financial systems of the Council.

Internal consultation: All services have been involved in the preparation of their revenue and capital budgets. Elected members have been involved, through the Policy and Budget Strategy Group and Shadow Budget Group, in formulating proposed administration and non-administration budgets.

External data: Information from the Scottish Government, COSLA and other government bodies has been received and used to assist with the budget process.

External consultation: Partner organisations have been involved and consulted through the full process, this includes Angus Health and Social Care Partnership and ANGUSalive.

Other: Discussion with Trade Unions has taken place on the budget and key proposals within the budget. All proposals for budget savings through the Council's Change Programme and changes to our charges have been subject to individual equalities impact assessments

Step 6: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the equality information you currently hold? Yes/No

If yes, please state what they are, and what measures you will take to obtain the evidence you need.

The full impacts of COVID-19 are still unknown and evidence will continue to be analysed as it arises. For example, the number of people unemployed which becomes evident after furlough finishes, the financial failure of some businesses, inability of citizens to pay council tax / rent, increased levels of homelessness and related increased levels of children living in poverty. All of these would have an adverse impact onto equality and create financial pressure on the Council's General Fund and Housing services.

It was not possible for the 2021/22 budget setting process, in part due to additional work caused by the pandemic, to undertake detailed engagement and consultation with the public on the Council's plans and budgets but members have agreed a process and timetable for this to be done for the 2022/23 budget process.

Step 7: Are there potential differential impacts on protected characteristic groups?

Please complete for each group, including details of the potential impact on those affected. Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from **Covid-19**.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each group. Please state the reason(s) why.

Age

Impact

Continued investment in early years expansion, schools and Angus Health and Social Care partnership and social work services is expected to have a positive impact across all age groups with the Angus area.

The budget proposes deferring a planned further reduction in teacher numbers at this time so that the impact of previous reductions may be more fully evaluated. Only a partial evaluation was possible for session 2020-21 due to periods of school closure and remote learning. The planned further reduction will also be considered in the context of our 'recovery plan' as we continue to respond to necessary restrictions due to COVID-19.

Disability

Impact

Investment in the redesign of the Children with Disabilities team which will expand capacity and enable a greater focus on the coordination and support of respite services will have a positive impact. This expansion will ensure that all children with disability cases can be handled by a dedicated team which is expected have a positive impact on the child and their families / carers.

The review of Public transport in the change programme will potentially have a positive impact on people with disabilities as it aims to make the transport system more accessible.

Gender reassignment

Impact

None

Marriage and Civil Partnership

Impact

None

Pregnancy/Maternity

Impact

None

Race - (includes Gypsy Travellers)

Impact

Religion or Belief

Impact

None

Sex

Impact

The review of public transport which is included in the change programme as part of this budget setting aims to create a transport system more able to be used by women, who are currently most often excluded because of lower instances of driving licence holding (especially amongst older women) or personal security concerns.

Sexual orientation

Impact

None

Step 8: Consultation with any of the groups potentially affected

If you have consulted with any group potentially affected, please give details of how this was done and what the results were.

Priorities in the proposed revenue and capital budgets align with the priorities in the Council Plan and continued consultation and engagement with groups across Angus was undertaken as part of the continued development of this plan.

Groups such as Angus Disability Forum and Deaf Action Angus will be consulted on the changes being considered for the Council's Contact Centre.

Head Teachers were consulted with regards the planned further reductions in teacher numbers.

If you have not consulted with any group potentially affected, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating action of any negative impact (Step 9)?

Step 9: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce potentially negative impacts?

The implications of individual change programme projects which may result in service reductions are, where necessary, subject of their own EIA and thus mitigating actions.

Step 10: If a potentially negative impact has been identified, please state below the justification.

Not applicable.

Step 11: In what way does this proposal contribute to any or all of the public sector equality duty to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations between people of different protected characteristics?

Some of the proposals that form part of the Council's budget for 2021/22 contribute to the achievement of statutory requirements to reduce the poverty / socio-economic attainment gap for children and young people. These include:

- A commitment to fund a programme of provision during school holidays which includes food and fun
- The investment in additional capacity for our Children, Families and Justice Service will increase the support available for those children and young people who are most disadvantaged
- The uplift in fees and allowances paid to kinship and other carers contributes to reducing poverty among the families of looked after children and young people.
- Key services offering support such as Welfare Rights have had resources retained at existing levels (protected from reductions in funding)

Step 12: Is there any action which could be taken to advance equalities in relation to this proposal?

Opportunities have been taken to reduce inequalities where possible, as detailed in this assessment and in particular where the Council is investing additional resources to address known additional demands.

Step 13: FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

This step is only applicable to **strategies** which are key, high level decisions. If your proposal is **not** a strategy, please leave this Step blank, and go to Step 14.

Links to data sources, information etc which you may find useful are in the Guidance.

Step 13(A) What evidence do you have about any socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome in relation to this strategic issue?

Analysis informing the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan and Council 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 some 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. Assessment work on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on these existing inequalities will be required.

Step 13(B) Please state if there are any gaps in socio-economic evidence for this strategy and how you will take measures to gather the evidence you need.

Ongoing engagement mainly through the Council's Communities Teams 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.

Step 13(C) Are there any potential impacts this strategy may have specifically on the undernoted groupings? Please remember to take into account any particular impact resulting from Covid-19.

Please state if there is a potentially positive, negative, neutral or unknown impact for each grouping.

Low and/or No Wealth (e.g. those with enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future.

Impact

Continued support for free school meals/hardship payments and digital inclusion with access to IT equipment for school children who would otherwise not have been able to learn at home is being made. A Council Tax freeze for 2021/22 if implemented will have a positive impact on low and no wealth households along with the continued suspension of car parking in Angus and the Council has made adequate provision in its budget to support those households eligible for Council Tax Reduction Scheme support. The budget also provides funding for Scottish Welfare Fund payments and Discretionary Housing Payments.

Material Deprivation (i.e. those unable to access basic goods and services e.g. repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies).

Impact

Angus Council continues to provide support to ANGUSalive, who have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 throughout 2020/21 and will continue to be so for much of 2021/22. This financial support will allow leisure facilities to welcome back all residents of Angus and continue to provide subsidised services including fitness and exercises classes and facilities, once safe to do so.

Some aspects of the Council's budget for 2021/22 may have a negative impact on material deprivation for those households with limited digital connectivity because the Council continues to move to more digital service provision. However, the Council knows digital approaches don't work for all and will continue to provide services in non-digital ways for those citizens who require this.

The budget provides funding for Scottish Welfare Fund payments including grants to allow basic goods to be provided as well as for financial and/or support in kind by our Social Work Services.

The Council expects to utilise additional funding from Scottish Government for food and financial insecurity during 2021/22 in response to the pandemic and the budget will ensure all such funds are directed to their intended purpose.

Area Deprivation (i.e. where people live (e.g. rural areas), or where they work (e.g. accessibility of transport).

Impact

The Council continues to invest in IT development in rural areas and also continues to provide public transport to these areas. COVID 19 impact on working from home and home schooling has seen funding from the Scottish Government for increased digital inclusion and safe use of school transport when and where necessary. This has had a positive impact on area deprivation.

Socio-economic Background i.e. social class including parents' education, people's employment and income.

Impact

The aspect of the budget setting proposals which will have the most significant impact on people who already experience socioeconomic disadvantage will be the related elements of the Council's Change Programme. This programme continues to focus on efficiency and minimising impact on front line services and has been impacted by COVID-19, delaying some of the projects from 2020/21 into 2021/22. It 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 with a socio-economic background but most of the budgets these groups rely on are being protected and in some cases enhanced through additional investment.

The Scottish Government continues to channel grants through Local Government to be paid over to business and the self-employed in the area which will have a positive impact in the longer term allowing more businesses to continue to operate in the future.

Additional investment in Tay City Deal will have a positive impact on the area and increase investment and employment opportunities.

Other – please indicate

Not applicable

Step 13(D) Please state below if there are measures which could be taken to reduce socio-economic disadvantage/inequalities of outcome.

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 2021/22 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. It is however important to stress the financial context the Council is operating in which is one of ongoing and severe financial constraint over many years now as evidenced by the £66.1m which has had to be saved in the last 8 years. The Council's ability to address socio-economic disadvantage is constrained to a significant extent by the funding it has available and the multitude of other statutory duties it is required to meet.

Step 14: What arrangements will be put in place to monitor and review the Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment?

Budgets are monitored throughout the financial year and reported to the Policy and Resources Committee and COVID-19 implications will be reported in addition during 2021/22.

Full equality impact/Fairer Scotland Duty assessments are carried out on an annual basis as part of the budget setting process and when specific budget proposals come forward during the year.

Step 15: Where will this Equality Impact/Fairer Scotland Duty Assessment be published?

On the Council's Intranet

Step 16: Sign off and Authorisation. Please state name, post, and date for each:

Prepared by: Jill Rennie, Team Leader, Finance 17/02/21

Reviewed by: Doreen Phillips, Snr Practitioner (Equalities) 18/02/21

Approved by: Ian Lorimer, Director of Finance, 24/02/21