

ANGUS COUNCIL

ANGUS COUNCIL – 3 NOVEMBER 2022

RECOVERY AND RENEWAL

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**ABSTRACT**

This report follows on from the Accounts Commission “[Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022](#)” referred to in ([Report No 204/22](#)) which was submitted to Scrutiny and Audit Committee on 23 August 2022. This report also provides details of what the Council is doing to respond in terms of the Cost of Living Crisis.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

1.1 It is recommended that Council:-

- (a) Notes the key messages from the Accounts Commission “Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022” also highlighted in Report 204/22 and notes how these key messages are linked to our experiences in Angus as is detailed in **Appendix 1** to this report;
- (b) Notes the detail in the “[Supplement One: Questions for Elected Members](#)” which formed part of the said Accounts Commission Overview which was designed to support elected members in scrutinising and understanding how well their council is planning recovery and renewal and notes the information provided which gives an Angus context to the questions posed as outlined in **Appendix 2** to this report; and
- (c) Notes what is being done in relation to the cost of living crisis working with communities and other partners to address the challenges facing our communities as outlined in **Appendix 3**.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COUNCIL PLAN**

2.1 This report contributes as a whole to the Council Plan. It provides valuable insight from a national perspective, which will help to inform this Council’s approach in order to support delivering the outcomes which focus on the Economy, People, Place and Our Council.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The operational key messages highlighted in the Accounts Commission report and referenced in the report to Scrutiny & Audit (R240/22) were discussed as part of an internal Angus Council Officers’ Recovery & Renewal Workshop on 12 August 2022 which highlighted the positive initiatives that Angus Council is progressing with partners. The output also detailed challenges in terms of staff absences, recruitment difficulties and the budgetary restraints which have created an acute need to do more with less resource. The information gathered is shared as Appendix 2 to this report.

3.2 [Questions for Elected Members](#) also formed part of a Supplement to the Accounts Commission’s report as referred to in the Scrutiny and Audit report R240/22. The supplement was a further output from the Recovery & Renewal Workshop and comprised 26 questions with seven themes broken up into sections. An Angus perspective to these questions was considered and colleagues were asked to input information into the “**Context**” and “**Evidence**” column to assist elected members in scrutinising and understanding how well the council is managing recovery and renewal. This information is shared as **Appendix 2** to this report.

3.3 The Incident Management Group which met regularly during the COVID pandemic has been reformed and is meeting every two weeks to look at Recovery, Renew and the Cost-of-Living Crisis. Relevant officers throughout the council as well as representatives from our partners attend. It is chaired by the Director of Legal and Democratic Services who is the council’s lead for Recovery and Renewal.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising for the Council from the recommendations contained within this report.

#### **5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 A full EIA is not required as there is no differential impact on people with protected characteristics in terms of the recommendations in this report.

#### **6. CONSULTATION (IF APPLICABLE)**

- 6.1 All Angus Council directorates and Angus Health and Social Care Partnership have contributed to this report.

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**NOTE:** The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

[Report 208/21](#) - COVID-19 Response, Recovery and Renew Update; [Appendix 2](#) - Recovery & Renew Strategic Framework.

[Report 217/20](#) - COVID-19 Response, Recovery and Renew; [Appendix 1](#) - Angus Council Covid-19 Route Map; [Appendix 2](#) - Co-ordination for Covid19, Response, Recovery Renew and Partnerships.

List of Appendices:

**Appendix 1** – Key operational messages highlighted in the Accounts Commission Report

**Appendix 2** - Questions for Elected Members

**Appendix 3**- Cost of Living Crisis

**Appendix 1 to Report Number 362**

The Accounts Commission report highlighted that this is not about returning to pre-pandemic status quo, but rather directing resources to help ensure that services can restart and are reshaped to meet the new needs of the local area, to address the harm caused by the pandemic, to support economic recovery, to empower communities, to address inequalities, and to tackle key priorities including climate change, growing poverty, and the long-standing need for public service reform.

**Key messages highlighted in the report, include the undernoted:**

<p>1.</p>	<p>Councils have had a very difficult year: alongside the ongoing response to the pandemic, councils have faced challenges in recovering services, dealing with increased demand and backlogs, and meeting community needs and expectations.</p>	<p>In Angus challenges have been:</p> <p>Managing staff absences and staff turnover in general. Turnover has been particularly difficult, with frequent recruitment, training and resignations from staff in permanent and temporary posts. Difficulties recruiting mirror national shortages in key roles. This has made it difficult to build resilience, upskill teams and make significant progress with automation post covid.</p> <p>Individual and team resilience has been impacted by the experience of the past 2 years with the impacts of the new ways of working and volume of work.</p> <p>Poverty is increasing which is a key priority for a lot of the working groups as well as how we support staff within teams dealing with such issues.</p> <p>Limited resources and continued budget and economic pressures have created challenges.</p> <p>Cost of living crisis is increasing demand on services.</p> <p>Increase in complaints, FOIS, MSP letters etc compounded by increased demand and workloads.</p> <p>Managing a large backlog in processing self-isolation support grant applications was also very challenging and impacted on the delivery of other work.</p> <p>Impact on services that support other services as they are diverted to new priorities and thus changed the nature of the support.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>The challenging context means collaborative leadership is more important than ever: the challenging operational context needs local government leaders skilled in effective strategic thinking, decision- making and collaborative working.</p>	<p>In Angus examples are leadership at all levels and across boundaries being demonstrated by a service design and partnership working approach.</p> <p>Leaders being more aware of creating spaces for their team and empowering them, using their professionalism and knowledge and developing as they do so.</p> <p>Two new leadership programmes have been developed and the Coaching Conversations course continues to have a high number of participants.</p> <p>Best Value Audit provided positive feedback on Angus and was good for staff morale.</p> <p>Leadership forums and training have positive impacts. External partnerships further strengthen collaboration. E.g., Tayside Regional Improvement Collaborative, Tayside Resilience Partnership, Angus Alive, Tayside Contracts, AHSCP, Tayside Procurement Consortium, Community Planning Partnership, Tay Cities Deal Regional Working etc.</p>

3.	<p>Pressure on the local government workforce continues: councils continue to experience high levels of staff absence, along with impacts on staff wellbeing and skills shortages, particularly in front-line workers</p>	<p>Pressures in Angus have included the volume of work impacting resilience. People often feeling unable to do their best work or think creatively when under pressure.</p> <p>Increasing demand for IT and Digital skills. Recruitment and retention of key skills crucial to deliver both operational activities and further digital transformation.</p> <p>Sourcing people with the skills needed to drive recovery – funding skills and project management.</p> <p>Staff absences have impacted workloads.</p> <p>Although remote working has significant advantages the reduction in face-to-face meetings can impact staff well-being at times. Managers are endeavouring to look for ways to support staff in terms of this including development days, team meetings in the office. Learning and Development are also supporting too – see below.</p> <p>Moving out of one crisis (covid) into another (cost of living)</p> <p>Recruitment – More challenging to recruit to temporary and time limited posts; national shortages e.g. in Planning and ECP officers.</p>
4.	<p>The impact of the pandemic and service disruption have been felt most strongly by those already experiencing inequality: not all services are back to pre-pandemic levels so those most in need of support are still being affected. Angus Council's recovery and renewal framework should also reflect the wider ambitions of the public sector reform agenda.</p>	<p>Evidence of this in Angus is:</p> <p>Service Design has given a true insight into the challenges our communities face and where resource needs to be put – out of hours services and investment in performance so we have the data and understanding to deliver the services people need</p> <p>Health &amp; Wellbeing – prevention and partnership working. Allowing critical services to focus on highest priority areas, and partners supporting in areas where they can provide 'softer' services</p> <p>Community Plan – partnership working to ensure there is no duplication of services and we can identify any gaps</p> <p>The right services / people doing the right work</p> <p>Move towards place-based working through the development of place frameworks to ensure a coordinated approach to service provision and future projects based on a detailed understanding of needs and priorities within a place.</p>
5.	<p>The early response showed what could be achieved by working closely with communities and the voluntary sector: this momentum may be lost if communities and the voluntary sector are not involved in shaping recovery</p>	<p>In Angus the response was for example the work with HAART.</p> <p>Voluntary Action Angus alongside the Third Sector Collaborative have completed a great piece of work with local people which complements the Service design process.</p> <p>Keep our partnership working with community groups and local resilience partners</p>
6.	<p>Improvements are needed in data availability, tools and skills to support performance monitoring, strategic decision-making and planning service improvements: data has been important in guiding the response to the pandemic, and</p>	<p>In Angus we have a big data strategy which is managed as part of the PLED programme. About to do a data maturity assessment along with other Councils facilitated by the Scottish Government.</p> <p>As above moving forward performance and everyone understanding why we need data is crucial as well as input from services through PLED etc to interpret cross service information.</p>

	<p>data is a key tool in tackling inequality, but there are gaps in equality data, particularly at a local level.</p>	<p>Systems data gaps have been identified where information cannot be easily migrated between systems and systems do not talk to each other.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Responding to the external environment:</b>  As councils continue to plan their recovery from Covid-19 and renewal they need to tackle key priorities including climate change, poverty, and the long-standing need for public service reform.</p>	<p>Evidence of this in Angus is (in relation to poverty) includes our Maximise Angus collaboration between Welfare Rights and Angus schools to try to reach more people in need to help them access their benefit entitlements and other support they need</p> <p>The council has declared a climate emergency. We have an action plan in place to address the Council's corporate approach to net zero. Climate change will underpin the approach to place-based working and development plan. Further work with business and communities will progress once a resource is in place to take forward the SECAP.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Organising the council:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• leading recovery and renewal: Leaders in local government face a challenging context. As they plan for recovery and renewal it will be important that they collaborate with their partners and communities. This will need skilled leadership, learning lessons from the pandemic and working to make the best use of resources to improve outcomes.</li> <li>• managing resources: Councils' finances have been significantly affected by Covid-19. The long-term funding position remains uncertain, with significant challenges ahead as councils continue to manage and respond to the impact of the pandemic on their services, finances, and communities.</li> <li>• managing the workforce: Pressure on the local government workforce continues, with high absence levels, impacts on wellbeing, particularly for front-line workers, and skills shortages in key areas. A resilient workforce is critical to the ongoing response to Covid-19 and the recovery of services. Councils will need to update workforce plans, learn lessons from new ways of working put in place, and provide wellbeing support for their staff.</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence of this in Angus in relation to managing resources includes our medium-term service and financial planning, the establishment of our COVID-19 Contingency Reserve and the setting aside of a significant capital funding to help manage COVID impacts on our capital programme.</p> <p>Ensuring we are clear about priorities, there are the actions to get there and definitive outcomes we wish to achieve.</p> <p>(Linked to Managing the Workforce) The Health &amp; Wellbeing Group is developing a Stress, Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing policy, a Stress Action Plan and a Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan. In addition, more than 30 people have come together to form a Staff Wellbeing Champions group, an initiative that will be launched on World Mental Health Day, 10 Oct 22. Understanding &amp; Developing Personal Resilience programmes have been taking place since 2020, with an opportunity for 1:1 personalised sessions focused on individual resilience. A working in a hybrid way and managing in a hybrid way are available modules are available via e-learning and Hive surveys are periodically issued to gauge support needed for wellbeing and new ways of working. 1:1 coaching, resilience coaching and professional relationship coaching continued to be offered across the organisation and in the partnership.</p> <p>Challenges around attracting new staff and recruiting and retaining skilled staff. The council needs to comply with statutory functions and duties and this can be challenging when there are vacancies in relevant posts.</p> <p>Working from home over the past few years in particular when staff are all so busy, can mean the team momentum and connection can feel less strong especially for new members of staff who have perhaps joined over the past 2 years. Managers have an awareness of this in terms of the Learning and Development courses on offer and how to address.</p> <p>A resilient workforce is required.</p> <p>Increasing asks of Local Authorities from Scottish Government and UK Government to deliver on new unfunded duties, develop new strategies and deliver and manage a large number of one year funds. Not all funds allow for top slicing to employ staff to do the work.</p> <p>As a smaller authority Angus Council does not have the specialist officers larger Local Authorities do and officers have more generic and wider ranging roles</p>

<p><b>9. Meeting local needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• impact of Covid-19 on services and inequality: Covid-19 continues to disrupt council services, and those already experiencing inequality have felt the impacts of both the pandemic and service disruption most strongly. As councils focus their efforts on addressing these unequal harms, they need better local data and community engagement.</li> <li>• collaboration and communities: The early response phase showed what could be achieved by working closely with communities and the voluntary sector. This momentum may be lost if they are not involved in shaping recovery.</li> </ul>	<p>Evidence of this in Angus is that resilience support is also being offered to the voluntary sector and other public bodies through a Tayside collaborative.</p> <p>A lot of work is coming out of the Child Poverty working group to support Angus residents.</p> <p>Website has been introduced by Comms to bring all support to residents of Angus in the one place.</p> <p>Community profiles to look at areas of need – working with the Police – partnership event took place in September – first 4 key towns – Arbroath, Carnoustie, Forfar and Brechin being focussed on initially</p> <p>Partnership approach signed off – AC and NHS working with Improvement Service (IS) and Public Health – Arbroath – Shaping Places for Wellbeing – Improvement Service is providing two members of staff – real data for Arbroath to target services in target areas.</p> <p>At start of pandemic – lot of support put together very quickly and very efficiently by HAART to support residents in Angus; groups engaged very quickly and everyone worked together well with less bureaucracy to get the work done.</p>
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**SUPPLEMENT 1 Prepared by Audit Scotland / May 2022**  
**Local Government in Scotland: Overview 2022**  
**Questions for Elected Members ACCOUNTS COMMISSION**

The checklist captures a number of questions for elected members to consider and relates to our Local Government in Scotland Overview 2022. It is designed to support elected members in scrutinising and understanding how well their council is planning recovery and renewal.

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Leadership – planning, strategy and improvement</b>			
<p>1. Does my council have clear plans for recovery and renewal, that outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• what it needs to do in the short, medium and longer term</li> <li>• the outcomes it will achieve</li> <li>• and the investment needed?</li> </ul>		<p>Recovery &amp; Renew Strategic Framework developed and agreed with an update provided for Council approval.</p> <p>The <a href="#">Strategy on a Page</a> was developed by all services across the council to support our recovery &amp; renewal planning, and is incorporated into the current version of the Council Plan.</p> <p>Examples of plans from services ie:</p> <p>Education Plan  Digital Strategy  Ambition to provide a digital plan for each service (as part of recovery).-</p> <p>Recommended investment will be brought to Council as appropriate for approval at Council's budget meeting with a clear rationale and demonstrable outcomes</p>	
<p>2. Is my council together with our partners, reviewing and aligning strategic plans and priorities (including Local Outcome Improvement Plans) to deliver recovery and renewal?</p> <p>Has it consulted with communities on these priorities?</p>		<p>Our Community Plan is currently being refreshed to include partnership priorities which will consider recovery and renewal in the round as well as cost of living challenges. Our communities are engaged with services and output from these engagements influence the content of plans. Further engagement is planned with communities which will help to inform locality planning.</p>	

		<p>A new Communication, engagement and consultation policy which will be presented to Angus Council's Policy and Resource Committee in December sets out a framework for community engagement to include the implementation of an Engagement portal which will ensure all engagement from the council and key partners is held in one place, with the aim to increase the reach and level of engagement with the citizens of Angus.</p>	
<p>3. Do recovery plans for my council consider key themes, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New ways of working</li> <li>• Inequalities</li> <li>• Education recovery</li> <li>• Economic recovery</li> <li>• Climate emergency</li> <li>• Health and wellbeing – community and workforce</li> </ul>		<p>The recovery plans which form part of the Council Plan include the key themes outlined. We have new ways of working supported by the Digital strategy, focussing on cloud technology, mobility, automation, digitalisation of services, adoption of digital technology and digital skills.</p> <p>The Recovery &amp; Renew Strategic Framework includes a list of priorities under economy people, place and our business.</p> <p>Details of Education recovery is outlined in the <a href="#">Annual Education Plan for 2021/22-</a></p> <p>Climate Emergency – Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plan <a href="https://www.angus.gov.uk/the_environment/sustainable_angus/climate_change">https://www.angus.gov.uk/the_environment/sustainable_angus/climate_change</a></p> <p>Mercury Programme <a href="https://www.angus.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/plans_policies_and_strategies/tay_cities_deal">https://www.angus.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/council_information/plans_policies_and_strategies/tay_cities_deal</a>)</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing</p>	
<p>4. Has my council considered the Scottish Government National Recovery Plan and Programme for Government as part of the refresh of its strategic plans and recovery plans?</p>		<p>Angus Council Plan for 2023 – 2028 is currently being drafted utilising the new Programme for Government and includes views of local elected members, Angus Council employees and is based on service design. The service design activities have been community led.</p> <p>The Recovery and Renew Framework in 2021 and in 2022, have utilised the Scottish Government Strategic Recovery Framework and the recognised recovery guidance through the Preparing Scotland and National doctrine.</p>	
<p>5. Does my council have clear plans for restarting paused, closed or reduced services for dealing with any service backlogs caused by the pandemic?</p>		<p>Most services have resumed to pre pandemic levels and a transformation project for ANGUSalive is in progress. The bigger issue that is likely to impact on services is finances. Our change programme includes plans to reduce our spend as a Council.</p>	



<p>6. Do I know how my council is learning lessons from the pandemic response and evaluating new service models to inform improvement and drive recovery and renewal? Am I assured my council is building on innovations made during the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting vulnerable groups</li> <li>• Working in partnership</li> <li>• Faster decision-making</li> <li>• Delivering services differently – e.g. digital</li> <li>• Working differently – remote and hybrid</li> </ul>		<p>Debriefs for learning, sharing of good practice and improvement have been undertaken throughout the pandemic, both as a Council and with our partners.</p> <p>Delivering services differently, in particular ensuring core council services are 'online' as far as possible and a focus on digital technologies to further automate the delivery of all public services.</p> <p>New policy on communication, consultation and engagement to better engage communities</p> <p>Agile working – allowing staff to have greater flexibility about where they work</p> <p>Closer joint working with partners</p> <p>Digital services have been accelerated to support service delivery during the pandemic and will continue to be developed as part of recovery &amp; renewal.</p>	
<p>7. Do I know how well my council uses data and what plans it has to develop data skills, data standards and data tools?</p>		<p>Council has a data strategy which is managed as part of the Performance Led Programme, PLED programme and is about to start a data maturity assessment along with other councils facilitated by the Scottish Government</p> <p>Best value audit has given guidance on this and has highlighted areas for improvement.</p> <p>The council has been making progress in using data and analysing information to inform decision – making taking account of our financial sustainability.</p> <p>Local Government Benchmarking (LGBF) reporting over the past 3 years has also raised the profile of services examining data to identify rationale behind service performance covering a wide range of indicators.</p> <p>We are also developing our capabilities using the Power BI reporting tool which will improve our approach to reporting performance.</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Leadership Skills</b>			
8. Is my council clear on what leadership skills are needed to drive forward recovery and renewal, and are there arrangements in place to deliver these?		<p>Best value audit was very positive about leadership at Angus Council.</p> <p>Two new leadership programmes, Coaching Conversations programme and Leadership Forums are in place, along with 1:1 coaching. Each of the programmes tie in with the council's values of collaboration and respect.</p> <p>Corporate Leadership Team and Directorate teams have high awareness of the leadership skills needed to deliver change including in terms of Recovery and Renewal. Leadership development programmes are in place to support learning and development.</p> <p>Recovery and Renewal including supporting communities in terms of the cost-of-living crisis is a key initiative at Angus Council working jointly with our partners and communities. The importance of developing positive working relationships with our partners and communities and working in the same direction is widely recognised</p> <p>Need to move away from the culture of council being the 'mother figure'</p> <p>Require true equitable partnership and co-production</p> <p>Regular Leadership Forums allow managers at the Council to come together and to focus on the Council's priorities.</p>	
9. Am I aware what succession planning arrangements and leadership development arrangements are in place for the council management team? Am I satisfied these are appropriate?		<p>We have a top-level workforce strategy which is being renewed</p> <p>Organisational Development is developing a succession planning model for people at all levels of the organisation. This will be available in autumn 2022.</p> <p>The workforce development action plan has been agreed and updated yearly, but this needs to be more of a 'live' working document with input from colleagues across the council.</p> <p>Workforce Development strategy needs to be more visible</p>	

		<p>Aging workforce population requires to be addressed mindful the demographics of the workforce mirror those nationally.</p> <p>Opportunities to move <u>up</u> have changed to opportunities to move <u>across</u> as the council has become a much flatter organisation</p> <p>The skillsets for workforce development are changing, need a broad range of skills rather than specific skills for a certain discipline (ie finance, comms, reporting)</p>	
<p>10. Do I have access to training and learning materials that meet my needs as an elected member? Have I taken up available opportunities that will assist me in being effective in my role?</p>		<p>Significant member induction programme provided with more training planned over the coming months. Member development strategy has now been approved.</p> <p>Induction training remains available</p> <p>In addition to the training already planned for members, a Political Skills Assessment was launched on 15 September. Each member was recommended to take up this opportunity for self- reflection, which is followed by a 1:1 discussion and development of a Personal Development Plan with a member of Organisational Development. This, in turn, will inform the Elected Member training programme for the year ahead.</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Governance</b>			
11. Do I have access to clear, timely, and sufficiently detailed information that allows me to carry out my governance and scrutiny role?		<p>The committee structure that we have is a robust framework that is well established and reviewed annually by Audit Scotland. There is also a Governance Member Officer Working Group, (MOWG), considering improvements to our governance framework.</p> <p>The level of detail provided by officers is sufficient for councillors to make the decisions required of them</p> <p>Operational vs Policy / Strategy matters.</p> <p>Council Training and Improvement Service training and notebooks make clear what roles members are expected to play. This is coupled with extensive guidance available and officer advice to ensure roles are carried out effectively</p> <p>Options appraisals policy and guidance is now in place</p> <p>Performance reports on the Council Plan and Community plan are considered by Angus Council and Scrutiny and Audit Committee on an annual basis in September each year with a key focus on outcomes. The change programme is reported quarterly to P&amp;R committee and a review of governance arrangements is reported to Scrutiny and Audit committee in June each year. Additional service performance reports are presented to various committees throughout the year.</p>	

		<p>The recent addition of options appraisal policy and guidance into the council's ways of working has supported provision of appropriate level of detail to assist scrutiny and assist good decision making. It was applauded in the Best Value Report.</p>	
<p>12. Do I have a clear picture of where my council is in terms of recovery and renewal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What new service demand, unmet needs, and what backlogs exist?</li> <li>• What changes to services have taken place and what impact assessments have been carried out for changes that have continued or are proposed?</li> </ul>		<p>Increased and change in demand as a result of pandemic which has become business as usual for front-line services</p> <p>Covid has also helped to accelerate change which has been beneficial in terms of more effective use of digital and greater partnership working and community engagement.</p> <p>The Child Poverty Working Group leads the work to deliver the statutory Child Poverty Act with the aim of reducing child poverty. Due to current economic challenges poverty rates have been increasing among those in work so an action plan was produced as part of the child poverty action plan to support local people.</p> <p>The Community Plan is currently under review and engagement is underway with local partners to ensure that the priorities and then subsequent activities within the plan will support the vision to make Angus a great place to live, work and visit. This includes themes around poverty, wellbeing, climate action and access to services.</p>	
<p>13. Am I satisfied that the governance arrangements in place in my council</p>		<p>All Council and Committee meetings are advertised with detail of the agenda for each.</p>	

<p>offer sufficient transparency and opportunities for public participation?</p>		<p>There is a process for the public to speak to Council and Committee.</p> <p>The Community Planning partnership have responsibility for a number of strategic plans including Heritage and Culture framework, Antisocial Behaviour plan, Community Learning and development plan, Food Growing Strategy, Child Poverty Strategy and Employability strategy. The governance is in place to monitor and report on the work underway within these plans.</p>	
<p>14. Do I understand what my responsibilities are when serving on external bodies (eg, ALEOs) and joint boards or committees?</p>		<p>All members were invited to a range of induction training sessions which covered a number of the external bodies where elected members of the council have a role. The Council has approved a new policy and process for appointments to outside bodies</p>	
<p>15. Am I familiar with the Councillors Code of Conduct for elected members?</p>		<p>This was covered in the induction training as well as the regular updates from the Standards Commission which the Monitoring Officer explains and sends on. There is also further training to be provided on this and staff within Legal and Committee are available to provide further advice.</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Finance</b>			
16. Am I clear about the financial challenges facing the council and how they are being managed?		<p>Reports to council and committee are provided on a regular basis, as well as through the Policy and Budget Steering Group.</p> <p>Future financial challenges have been highlighted on an ongoing basis for the last several years including on detailed risk reporting. This was covered in the member induction programme and most recently in Report 178/22 to June 2022 Council meeting. Update to Medium Term Budget Strategy will be provided to Council in November</p>	
17. Has my council developed longer term financial plans that clearly link to recovery plans?		<p>A longer-term financial planning framework is in development and uses a PESTLE approach, (Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental) as its basis of analysis which will include the council's plans for recovery and renewal</p> <p>Recovery plans will require to be delivered in line with the restricted budgets available to do this. It is anticipated that recovery will become part of business as usual.</p>	
18. Does my council have clear and robust plans in place for the management of reserves?	I	<p>Again, this is reported at council .</p> <p>The council has a reserves drawdown strategy and all reserves are reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process. A review is nearing completion of all existing commitments in Reserves</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Workforce</b>			
<p>19. Does my council have detailed corporate and service workforce planning in place? Have these plans been updated to reflect the impact of Covid-19?</p> <p>Do these include plans for managing impact of pandemic on staff wellbeing?</p>		<p>Council Workforce strategy in place – and this will be updated as part of budget setting process</p> <p>Angus Health &amp; Social Care Partnership also has a workforce plan.</p> <p>Work to update service workforce planning has been delayed due to staffing shortages.</p> <p>There are various initiatives and policies which cover staff well-being including the Yammer well-being group and You Matter for sharing well-being tips and advice.</p> <p>The Health and Well-being group is developing a Stress, Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing policy, a Stress Action Plan and a Health &amp; Wellbeing Strategy Action Plan. Resources have been put in place to offer group and individual support for resilience and wellbeing through resilience coaching, programmes and a new Staff Wellbeing Champion initiative.</p> <p>The Council has introduced a digital system to manage Health, Safety and Wellbeing – this includes stress assessments and associated actions.</p> <p>The Council also has an employee assistance programme and a new mental health first aider volunteer programme.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention is a significant issue across most services and a new</p>	



		<p>recruitment process and team has been deployed in response.</p> <p>Retention of experienced staff is a key challenge and the Council have had to use more temporary contracts than in the past. It is difficult to address some of this given the Council's financial challenges.</p>	
<p>20. Does my council understand any specific areas of skills shortages that risk delivery of its objectives? Eg social care, facilities management.</p>		<p>There are shortages in IT and Digital skills as well as in other areas across the Council. Recruitment and retention of key skills crucial to deliver both operational activities and further digital transformation is a real challenge.</p> <p>Payroll and health &amp; safety advisers are another area of major challenge but this issue is common across most professional roles.</p> <p>There is a need to grow our own to address shortages and to improve succession planning.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention has been a particular challenge across Business Support and in the Council's Contact Centre.</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Meeting Local Needs</b>			
21. Does my council understand the changing demographic profile, poverty levels, and cost of living increases in our council area and how this will impact on demand for council services?		<p>Pressure on welfare referrals</p> <p>Increase use of food and introduction of clothing banks</p> <p>Impact on health as people buy lower quality foods – less healthy and alcohol misuse may impact in the future</p> <p>Evidence coming through from community planning partnership – service redesign on poverty and referral process.</p> <p>Cost of living increases nationally</p> <p>Angus Council has identified areas of deprivation and targeting services in these areas</p>	
22. Does my council have data and an understanding at a local level of the impact of the pandemic on different groups, in particular how inequalities have been exacerbated?		<p>VAA, Voluntary Action Angus, received funds to commission a report with 3 other partners which was published in August. Citizen survey – citizens in Angus with lots of information provided.</p> <p>Elderly/children/sports groups/village groups/ - different impacts on lots of different groups</p>	
23. Does my council have plans in place to address these unequal impacts?		Equality Impact Assessments for committee reports decision making	

		<p>Recovery plan being worked on across the council.</p> <p>Addressed through future recovery plans and ensuring that those impacted have access to the support available.</p>	
<p>24. Does my council have plans in place to address key priorities and areas of reform, including social care and climate change?</p>		<p>Sustainable Energy and Climate Change Action Plan, (SECAP), and new post to support the climate agenda – Mercury programme focus on sustainable growth</p> <p>Members officer groups will be introduced on the back of the SECAP</p> <p>The Council Plan is currently being reviewed to provide a 5 year vision for the area of Angus. This will complement the Community plan and ensure there is a strategic link across partnership plans and other governmental priorities.</p> <p>Housing Capital plans – carry out work to housing – energy efficiency programme in the capital plan – various targets to meet .</p> <p>New Monifieth High School Passivehaus standards</p>	

Questions for Elected Members to consider	What do I know	Context and Evidence provided for Angus	Do I need to ask any further questions
<b>Community empowerment and collaboration</b>			
25. How well is my council involving communities and citizens in driving recovery plans and reshaping services? What needs to improve?		<p>New engagement tool will help</p> <p>Review and update recovery plan, aligned to Council Plan and priorities.</p> <p>New communication and engagement policy and new portal for whole of the council and training for staff will be provided – all engagement will go through one portal – any plans for reshaping service it will all be done in one place</p>	
26. How well is my council collaborating with local partners including the third sector in planning and delivering services?		<p>The Angus Community Planning Partnership meets on a quarterly basis with a strategic group sitting alongside this to raise key challenges and opportunities. Collaboration and partnership working is well established in Angus. A third sector collaborative has been established and a transforming services group meets on a regular basis. This followed extensive work to move from an SLA approach to a grants and contract arrangement through improved procurement arrangements and a move towards an outcomes focussed grant award over 3 years.</p> <p>To deliver the Angus Community Plan there are working groups in operation to deliver the priorities. These include the Child Poverty Working Group, Mental health and wellbeing network and Transport Network. All groups have a good membership from across the local organisations.</p>	

		<p>Focussed partnership groups on all areas of work – young people adult learning lots of work ongoing – heavy council involvement with those</p> <p>Food Standards Scotland – national recovery plan – resource assessment to identify what was needed to get back on track with staff numbers – resource required to implement the recovery plan and get service up to speed.</p> <p>No staff resource and no funding to take this forward – feedback given back to Scottish Government</p> <p>Tayside Local Resilience Partnership work is exemplar. Working with all partners is vital in dealing with incidents and emergencies as per statutory requirement. Roles and responsibilities defined.</p>	
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## Recovery and Renewal – Cost of Living Crisis

What is being done now in terms of the cost-of-living crisis:

### **Education & Lifelong Learning, (ELL)**

Delivery of holiday provision 2022 (funded by Angus Council and Scottish Government) has supported children and families with the Cost-of-Living Crisis; total spend to date £174,965.14 Funding was provided to over 60 partner providers within and out with Angus Council including Social Work, Vibrant Communities, ANGUSalive and local food hubs. This offer provided 10,617 activity sessions. Children and families were also able to enjoy 29,204 free meals (breakfast/lunch/snack). In addition to this 200 employment/volunteering opportunities were created. More than 9,000 free journeys were used throughout Angus, some of which included taxi journeys for children and young people with additional support needs. Our targeted childcare offer provided families a total of 15,960 hours of free childcare.

Cost of the School Day – We continue to offer free school meals to all children P1- P5 and all eligible P6 - S6. Working with the Maximise Angus Team ELL are actively promoting the uptake of Free School Meals, School Clothing Grants & Education Maintenance Allowance . Child Bridging payments and Holiday Free School Meals payments are made to eligible families which is ongoing. The Cost of the School Day toolkit is used by school staff to ensure best practice. A base line of need has been identified to support the development of additional breakfast club provision, the purpose is to offer children and young people to access to a healthy breakfast and targeted free childcare to primary aged children.

### **Cost of Living Roadshow Joint Project – Education & Lifelong Learning, Vibrant Communities & Community Planning Partnership**

5 October 2022 saw our first [Cost of Living Roadshow](#), which took place at Arbroath FC's Gayfield Park. Over 250 Angus residents came along to get free professional advice on dealing with rising fuel and food costs, money savings and benefits as well as information on financial support available.

The roadshow organised by the Angus Community Planning Partnership included staff within council services such as welfare rights, housing, revenues and benefits, vibrant communities as well as external organisations Citizens Advice Bureau, PENUMBRA, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, ANGUSalive, NHS and many others. In total 23 support services attended with information and advice for local people. Feedback forms have now been sent out to gauge what went well and what could be improved moving forward. In addition, a mapping exercise is underway to determine what services will be available and when over the winter months in terms of food provision and warm spaces. The aim is for this work to be put on an interactive map so local people can put in their postcode to identify where the closest support organisations are.

We anticipate this will be the first in a series of multi-agency drop-in events offering support and advice to our citizens.

### **Communications**

Scottish Government provided Angus Council with one off funding totalling £1,672,000 to support local businesses and people through the Covid-19 recovery and other emerging pressures including child poverty, food poverty, energy, fuel and transport poverty and the overall increased cost of living.

This one-off funding is a share of the national £80-million Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery (LACER) Fund (<https://www.angus.gov.uk/lacer>).

This additional funding is being targeted to where it is in greatest need through a range of council services, including housing, revenue and benefits and welfare rights.

We are acutely aware that rising food, energy and fuel costs, as well as wider economic challenges are making life difficult for many people in Angus.

Working closely with our community partners, local and national organisations we are providing as much help and information as we can to ensure that people have access to the right support at the earliest opportunity.

Our dedicated [Help with the cost of living](#) webpage gathers links to where help and advice is available not just from Angus Council, but also from voluntary groups, and local and national organisations. It is updated as more advice and information become available.

There has been extensive promotion of the many sources of support to meet the cost of living crisis on the social media channels of Angus Council.

In planning for winter, Angus Council, its resilience partners and volunteers continuously look at measures to reduce risk, increase resilience, and consider what further effective actions can be implemented in support of this.

With consideration to the activity above, there has been no specific requirement to draw on the Council's General Fund in relation to Cost of Living Matters at this time.

### **Welfare Rights**

The Welfare Rights team continues to provide support, advice and representation to all Angus citizens in relation to benefit entitlements, claims and challenges/appeals. A comprehensive debt advice service covering all aspects of personal debt and threatened homelessness due to debt issues is also provided. Access to the service can be self-referral via several channels as well as referral by other services/agencies.

The team works in collaboration with many other services and organisations to provide both a staff advice line and referral pathways for Angus citizens. Significant projects include our dedicated Macmillan worker and our partnership with NHS Tayside midwifery, health visiting and family nurse practitioner services. The team also attends many community events to raise awareness of the service and provide advice to attendees.

Maximise Angus Joint Project – Welfare Rights & Education & Lifelong Learning. The recent launch of another project from the welfare rights team is Maximise Angus! This project consists of two financial wellbeing practitioners to work in conjunction with our schools and learning colleagues to deliver advice, support and representation focussed on families via the school environment. Dedicated referral pathways for school staff are in place to refer families in need of such advice and support around entitlements and debt advice. The staff will also deal with financial crisis and provide appropriate support to alleviate this. Staff will also provide a presence within schools at events such as parent's evenings, family learning events and similar as well as attending school holiday sessions.

The Welfare Rights team is managing a discretionary fund secured via LACER funding. This will allow workers to alleviate financial need and crisis when working with individuals/families experiencing financial hardship including food and fuel difficulties and other essential requirements.

### **Vibrant Communities**

The Communities teams, along with other teams as outlined above were involved in the first of a planned series of events regarding help with the cost of living. Feedback from the session held on Wednesday 5 October in Arbroath will inform further events. The team produced this flyer advertising sources of support available on this link: [Cost Of Living Leaflet.pdf](#). The LACER fund & Holiday Food and Fun budget (mentioned above) provided funding for slow cookers and food packages, individuals and families who attended the cost-of-living roadshow and were referred to receive a slow cooker will receive follow-up communication (phone call and/or email) to ensure that they have the support and resources they need in tackling their cost-of-living issues.

The Angus Council Vibrant Communities youth work staff have carried out several engagement activities to understand issues and difficulties for young people during and beyond covid. Engagement work has been carried out with young people, 3rd sector partners, public services and schools to better understand needs. This work has highlighted worsening inequalities and life chances for some of our young people in Angus due to covid and the current cost of living crisis. All youth work activities have been delivered at no cost, including all holiday activities and evening provision, and we have been able to provide food to young people.

Our engagement work has also resulted in the following project developments:

During covid a youth partnership was successful in gaining youth work recovery funding which allowed 250 young people to be supported to take part in activities that would support mental health and learning, and achievement. These young people were targeted through schools and 3rd sectors such as TCA and Angus Young Carers we are still currently in touch and working with these young people.

A further partnership between Angus Women's Aid, Showcase, TCA, Football trusts, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire Service and Angus Council VC has been formed and funding bid for over 500k has been submitted to widen our reach to support those young people who have or who are at risk from disengaging from school and who are involved in risk-taking behaviours in their communities.

The Village and Community Hall fund has been distributed and has supported town and village halls to become more resilient, with some halls using the funding to make energy efficiencies. Community Development staff have undertaken a supportive and guidance role to village halls, assisting some with the SSEN grants applications and supporting village and church and community groups wishing to extend their programme that enhances good physical and mental well-being as well as offering hot food and warm and safe places to socialise. This support has also been taken up from other council departments and from the NHS which will lead to better all-around provision to support the citizens of Angus with their cost of living.

Additional funding is expected from SSEN and discussions are underway as to how the hall groups can be supported further in becoming more resilient in supporting their communities. The fund will be available to allow village and towns halls to support the cost of living crisis by putting on additional activities, providing food and warmth where required.

The federation of town halls group has been active over the last two years and have welcomed additional members. They have been included in meetings with SSEN, along with Vibrant Community Officers and Angus Council's resilience team- and additional work is ongoing to support the group where required.

With the facilitation and networking efforts of the Community Development team, several groups in Brechin have come together to plan, address gaps and support each other in providing services for individuals, families and groups. This will ensure equality of provision is spread across the town for those that require additional support due to the high cost of living.

Through the adult learning delivery, weekly volunteer-led Community Cafés provide a place for families to get hot food, participate in wellbeing activities, access the internet with digital literacy support, and meet with a range of partners, including health workers, welfare rights advisors and housing associations. Donations of food from Lidl are available free of charge. In Forfar, a local tenants' group takes surplus food to distribute in the local community, reducing food waste. The demand for this support has increased over the last year. The Vibrant Community teams are working with communities to build the capacity of volunteers to assist throughout Angus.

Learning Centres provide help with reading, writing, numeracy and digital literacy for adults. Learners are given advice and support to make benefit claims, apply for grants and access services. The demand for additional support to solve benefit claim issues, receive debt advice and other vital support has increased over the last year, with staff seeing a rise in stress and mental health issues relating to the rising cost of living.

Two years of data and ongoing digital literacy support have been provided to 226 individuals through the Connecting Scotland scheme by Angus Council partners (Vibrant Communities Team, 16+, Housing and Throughcare Aftercare) Applications are still being made and IT devices (Chromebooks and i-pads) are being distributed to those that need support.

We continue to deliver adult learning to improve well-being, build confidence, which leads to positive outcomes in health and socially positive attitudes and behaviours. The high cost of living is having a detrimental effect on the people we work with and support is ongoing.

### **Community Planning**

The Community Planning Partnership have continued to support the 3 priorities of – Reducing Child Poverty, Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing and Improving Accessibility and Connectivity. In delivering this work there are now working groups under each priority working in partnership to make



an impact at a local level. This was showcased recently in the Annual Performance Report and Child Poverty Action Report. Over the coming months work will be ongoing to provide a partnership response to the cost of living challenges that people in our communities are facing including food poverty, energy bill increases and potential severe weather events. On 27th October 2022, the Partnership meet for the last meeting of the year and Voluntary Action Angus will take on the chairperson role.

## **Assets**

We are reviewing our COVID -19 VENTILATION AND HEATING POLICY FOR THE WINTER PERIOD to ensure that our pupils, our staff and visitors to our buildings feel safe and as comfortable as possible. Appropriate ventilation remains a vital aspect of providing healthy environments and we will actively balance temperature and ventilation.

We will also be launching an energy efficiency awareness campaign across the Council to help reduce our carbon footprint and have the additional benefit of minimising energy consumption and associated costs.

## **Angus Health & Social Care Partnership**

It is very clear that pressures from the increased cost of living are being felt across the whole health and social care system, by service users, carers, provider organisations and by our staff.

There are particular issues around fuel costs (building and vehicles), and wages and recruitment.

There are significant challenges in the increased levels of demand for care at home and our capacity to meet that demand. Care at home delivery has increased from 10,350 hours per week to 14,400 hours per week over 4 years. There is currently a shortfall in provision of 1,924 hours per week. If we were able to provide all of the assessed need for care at home, it would be 16,324 hours. These issues pre-date the cost of living crisis but are heightened by it. The AHSCP has worked closely with independent and third party providers to address the barriers that they have to growing their services to meet this increased demand. Their issues are a) recruitment and retention of staff when wages are not competitive with, for example, the hospitality or retail sector b) staff being reluctant to drive their vehicles due to fuel costs c) the cost for the organisations around transport d) in the case of care homes and day centres, increased running costs due to high power costs. The last point, coupled with heightened insurance costs and infection control measures due to Covid, has threatened the viability of some providers. Provider sustainability is a risk considered at our Clinical Care Governance Group and regularly reviewed. We are also developing a risk score card on provider viability in order to monitor this issue internally and to provide data to the Scottish Government.

To support provider viability, with the objective of sustaining care to service users, we have undertaken the following actions:

- 1) Increased the mileage rate for care at home providers from 45 to 56 pence per mile, on condition that this is passed directly to staff.
- 2) Funded leased vehicle provision for a number of providers, particularly in rural areas.
- 3) Offered an increased pay rate to SDS Option 2 and 3 Providers of 40p per hour.
- 4) A range of supports with recruitment activity (ongoing).

It has also been agreed, following discussions with staff and trade unions, to change the shift system in Enablement and Response (internal care provision) between November and March to increase the working hours available to staff, most of whom were on 24 hour per week contracts.

## **Impact of cost of living issues on services**

Rather than a series of new demands, the AHSCP envisages that, within its delegated functions, there will be an intensification of current demands as a result of the cost of living crisis. Notwithstanding that this may vary depending on the depth or duration of the crisis, and any national mitigation which might take place, we can reasonably anticipate the following:

- 1) An increased demand for Section 12 Social Work (Scotland) / S22 (Children Scotland Act 1995) payments to support destitute families with food and fuel. Meeting this need is a

statutory duty, but can be mitigated to an extent by referral to food banks, use of food parcels, referrals to third sector etc.

- 2) Pressures on carers and the breakdown of care at home situations, with greater need for care services, day care, residential respite, and increased receptions into care for vulnerable adults.
- 3) An increase in Adult Support and Protection referrals.
- 4) Poorer health outcomes for people with existing health vulnerabilities, exasperated by cold living conditions and stress.
- 5) If benefits are cut to pay for the new UK budget arrangements, all of the above will be exasperated for the poorest members of our communities.
- 6) A decrease in good mental health and increased referrals to mental health and substance misuse services.