

ANGUS COUNCIL – 7 SEPTEMBER 2023

2024/25 BUDGET COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND THE DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT
COMMUNITIES & SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

ABSTRACT

This report advises members of a plan for communication and engagement as part of the Council's 2024/25 planning and budget setting process. The report seeks approval of the proposed plan. It is proposed that implementation of the plan be monitored through the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG).

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 It is recommended that the Council:

- a) note the background to the proposals and that these are to be taken forward in line with the Council's Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy;
- b) approve the 2024/25 budget engagement plan set out in Appendix A; and
- c) agree that the implementation of the plan be monitored through the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG).

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN

2.1 This report is relevant to the following priorities as set out in the Council Plan:-

- work collaboratively for and with our citizens to keep them safe in resilient communities
- listen to the needs of our customers and by working for and with them deliver better public value.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Council undertook a public consultation on its plans and budgets ahead of the 2022/23 budget setting process. Resource limitations and the sheer scale of the savings challenge for 2023/24 meant that no public consultation was undertaken for that budget setting process.

3.2 It remains the case that the scale and severity of the Council's financial challenges (our projected budget gaps) are such that there is very limited room for manoeuvre on savings options. This means that seeking views from Angus citizens on multiple choice options for how to make savings has limitations. We should, however, still seek to inform, engage and, where appropriate, consult on our plans, priorities and budgets where this will help inform decision-making. This work will also support elected members in making decisions and is in line with good practice. The Accounts Commission Overview Report 2023 refers to the need for Councils to "better involve service users and communities, including those with lived experience as they redesign services".

3.3 In December 2022 the Policy & Resources Committee agreed a Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy ([Report 407/22](#) refers) which set out the Council's position, role, and commitments to ensure community engagement is integrated into Council activities to support decision making, build relationships and strengthen communities. The policy seeks to improve engagement processes and outcomes by encouraging a consistent approach and continual learning through evaluation and expanding the range of engagement methods used. The Policy is being supported and delivered by:

- Developing a portal for all engagement and consultation to be held and analysed in one place for the communities to have easy access
- Developing a consistent approach to engagement and consultation
- Developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation
- Utilising the expertise and the success of 'Ambassador roles' to build capacity within the organisation
- Ensuring staff are fully informed and aware of the policy through launching the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Framework.
- Facilitating awareness sessions to share learning
- Allowing access to staff training modules in Always Learning

3.4 Among the principles included in The Policy are:-

- To provide effective, accountable, honest, open, and accessible communications, consultations, and engagements
- To make clear distinctions between communications, consultations, and engagements and ensure that these terms are used appropriately.
- To ensure that there is a clear purpose for the communication, consultation, or engagement
- To use a variety of communications, engagement, and consultation tools to inform and develop good practice in all our services

4. PROPOSED PLAN

4.1 The proposed plan for communication and engagement as part of the Council's 2024/25 budget setting process is attached as Appendix A to this report and members are being asked to approve this plan. The plan covers the period September 2023 to March 2024 and a variety of activity is intended to take place over that 7 month period. At this stage some of the proposed communication content is still in preparation and there are aspects of the plan which require details to be firmed up given these are some months away from being actioned.

4.2 It is proposed that oversight of the plan's further development and implementation be undertaken by the Policy & Budget Strategy Group (PBSG) as a natural part of that Group's work in developing the Council's budget strategy.

4.3 A particular focus of the plan is communication and a variety of methods will be used to make this as accessible as possible. Likewise engagement activity will use a range of methods (in line with the Communication, Engagement and Consultation Policy) to maximise participation by communities across Angus.

4.4 The communication and engagement plan for the 2024/25 Budget is part of a programme which is being developed.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. Existing staff and systems will be used to deliver the plan. Staff capacity for this work is however limited so it will be necessary to ensure that the time committed to it is proportionate to the benefit and impact it will have.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 An equality impact assessment has been prepared and is attached as Appendix B.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 were relied on in preparing this report.

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – 2024/25 Budget Communication and Engagement Plan

Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment