

SPECIAL ANGUS COUNCIL – 27 FEBRUARY 2025

2025/26 PLANS & BUDGETS CONSULTATION - RESULTS FROM PHASES 1 AND 2

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

1. ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report reminds members of the results of the first stage of the Council's 2025/26 Plans and Budgets Consultation and updates members on the results of the second stage of this consultation.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

- 2.1 This report is relevant to all of the policies and priorities set out in the Council Plan.

3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council:

- (i) notes the reminder of the results of Phase 1 of the 2025/26 Plans & Budgets Consultation as set out in Sections 4 and 5 of this report;
- (ii) notes the results and comments from Phase 2 of the Consultation as set out in Section 6 and Appendices A(i) and A(ii) of this report; and
- (iii) has regard to the feedback and comments arising from both phases of the Consultation in considering budget options and setting the budget and Council Tax for financial year 2025/26.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Council regularly seeks views of the residents of Angus over important issues and this includes budget setting. This year, through Report 271/24 members agreed to adopt a two stage approach to consultation for the 2025/26 budget setting process.
- 4.2 Stage 1 was a four-week consultation which ran from 19 September to 14 October 2024. This phase sought views on the relative importance of the priorities and actions in the Angus Council Plan. The full results of this phase were reported to Council in December in Report 388/24 and its appendices.
- 4.3 Stage 2 was a three week consultation which ran from 16 January to 6 February 2025. This focused on obtaining views on the best way to achieve a balanced budget for what was, at that time, projected to be £9.5 million budget gap using the four options open to council: reducing expenditure, increasing Council Tax, increasing fees and charges, and using reserves. As members will see from Report 58/25 the budget gap has increased to £11.7 million since the consultation was launched.

5. REMINDER OF KEY POINTS FROM STAGE 1

- 5.1 Members will recall that the results from Stage 1 showed broad support for the priorities and actions outlined in the Council Plan with the majority of respondents scoring them as either important or very important. This confirms the continued relevance of the Council Plan's priorities for respondents. However as noted in Report 388/24, members should also note that Council Plan actions to tackle climate change, move towards Net Zero and to encourage active travel received the highest percentages of "not at all important" and of "low importance" ratings which suggest that respondents are less supportive of the Council Plan actions on these aspects. Of note were the following:

- In Care for the Economy, encouraging and investing in jobs across Angus which pay fairly and treat employees equally and with respect was scored highly as “very important” with 255 (59%) of responses.
- In Care for People, providing the best start in life for children was the highest “very important” score with 272 (63%) of responses.
- In Caring for Place, actions towards reducing climate change were rated as “not at all important” or of “low importance” by 94 (22%) respondents.

6. STAGE 2 – CONSULTATION RESULTS

6.1 The consultation was promoted via the following channels:

- **Traditional Media**

In print and online

- **Social media**

This produced overwhelmingly the highest level of response to the 37 posts which were issued over the council’s social media channels over the period of the engagement:

- Total impressions 46,824
- Engagements 8,638 (engagement rate per impression 18.4%)
- Post link clicks 446

	Published Posts	Total Impressions	Average Reach Per Post
Cross-Network Totals	20	46,824	3,525.83
X	2	872	N/A
Facebook	6	43,797	6,815.33
Instagram	6	1,463	236.33
Linkedin	6	692	N/A

It was also shared to the Council’s Threads account, but metrics cannot be recorded as yet.

- **Schools**

An email was issued to Headteachers asking them to share with their young people directly and encourage/support them to complete.

- **Housing**

Housing teams were sent the consultation link to share with tenants.

- **Community councils**

All community councils were emailed the link to Engage Angus, made aware of the availability of paper copies and were sent posters for them to promote the consultation in their meetings and on their notice boards.

- **Libraries**

Paper copies were prepared and emailed to all libraries to print out if required. However, due to the nature of this consultation, librarians were asked to support people to use the digital tool as this removed the need to complete the mathematical task of adding up the proposed allocations. For this reason, no data is available to indicate if forms were completed with librarian support. No paper copies were returned.

- **Communities’ teams**

Staff working on the ground were given the consultation link and asked to share paper copies if required or assist people to complete online. This includes the Horizon and Promise groups.

6.2 There were a total of 391 submitted forms, of the following demographics:

Age:

0-18	9
19-24	4
25-39	84
40-49	79
50-64	133
65+	59
Prefer not to say	8
Blank	15

Gender:

Female	172
Male	182
Other	3
Prefer not to say	19
Blank	15

Disability:

Yes	51
No	295
Prefer not to say	27
Blank	18

Ethnicity:

Any other white background	3
Caribbean (white and black)	3
Gypsy/Traveller	1
Irish	1
Other British	33
Polish	2
Scottish	282
Scottish Indian	1
Blank	65

6.3 Attached as Appendix A(i) is a list of the individual responses from the consultation including comments which could be added as free text. Respondents were asked to propose ways to close the projected £9.5 million budget gap using the four methods open to the Council, namely: reducing expenditure, increasing Council Tax, increasing fees and charges, and using reserves.

The following are the average change in percentage in each of the four possible options:

Measure	Consultation Average	Equivalent to
Reduce Expenditure	4.92%	A reduction in expenditure of £6.15m
Increase Council Tax	6.04%	An increase in Band D Council Tax of £79.53 resulting in additional income of £3.81m
Increase Fees and Charges	6.07%	An increase in income of £0.41m
Use council reserves	6.36%	A use of Reserves of £1.27m

The average percentage result when converted to financial values exceeds the £9.5m projected gap. Meeting the gap was the minimum required but respondents were free to go above that figure in choosing their options.

As well as making comments when considering the options some respondents also took the opportunity to provide final comments on the submission page. These comments are included as Appendix A(ii). There may therefore be some overlap in comments between Appendices A(i) and A(ii).

- 6.4 Key themes from the comments both from the free text box and the final comments sections include:
- Lack of understanding as to why the Council has such a budget gap when services are seen to be poorer than in the past
 - There were 44 comments recommending or accepting the necessity of an increase in Council Tax compared with 17 comments asking not to increase Council Tax
 - The Council should seek savings by driving greater efficiencies. Specific ideas mentioned include moving to more digital services, stopping what respondents felt to be non-essential services, not funding projects that they did not see the value in, selling more surplus buildings, and closing smaller schools.
 - By far and away the most comments (52) proposed making cuts by reducing the number of Councillor and/or senior/manager officer posts, or by removing benefits from staff such as reducing salaries, pension benefits and holiday/sick pay.
 - Another common theme was to encourage the Council to rigorously pursue the non-payment of debts such as Council Tax.

7. PROPOSALS

- 7.1 The Council has gathered a lot of information and comments from both phases of the consultation undertaken in the lead up to the 2025/26 budget setting and it's been pleasing to see a reasonable level of participation in these consultation by citizens of all ages across Angus. By necessity the consultations simplify the issues and decisions which elected members have to make in relation to priorities and budgets and members will wish to reflect on the consultation feedback as well as all the other factors (including the now higher budget gap) affecting the 2025/26 budget process as is outlined in the reports before today's special Council meeting.
- 7.2 Council is asked to have regard to the feedback and comments arising from both phases of the Consultation in considering budget options and setting the budget and Council Tax for financial year 2025/26.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 The following risks from the Corporate Risk Register are relevant to this report:-
- Financial Sustainability
 - Transforming for the Future

10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

11. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and can be found at this [link](#).

12. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 The Council is required to balance its budget as part of its duty under section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs.
- 12.2 Section 6 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 ("the UNCRC Act") makes it unlawful for a public authority to act, or fail to act, in connection with a "relevant function" in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements. A "relevant function" is defined within section 6(2) of the UNCRC Act. The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 is an UK Act of Parliament and, as such, the UNCRC Act compatibility duty does not directly apply to the requirement within Section 95 to set a balanced budget. However, in setting its budget there may be indirect impact on functions of the Council conferred by Scottish Acts of Parliament to which the UNCRC compatibility duty applies.

- 12.3 A Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been carried out within the EIA, including consideration of the four general principles of the Convention: non-discrimination (Article 2); best interests of the child (Article 3); right to life, survival and development (Article 6) and right to be heard in decision making (Article 12).

13. CONSULTATION

- 13.1 The Chief Executive and Acting Director of Legal, Governance and Change have been consulted on this report. The Budget Consultation proposals were also the subject of discussion at the Policy & Budget Strategy Group meetings on 22 November 2024 and 22 January 2025.

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(i) – Individual Consultation Responses
Appendix A(ii) – Additional Consultation Comments